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VISION SEEKERS

PART 1



**A Structured Personal & Social Development Program
for First Nations' Youth at High Social Risk**

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VISION SEEKERS

Part 1

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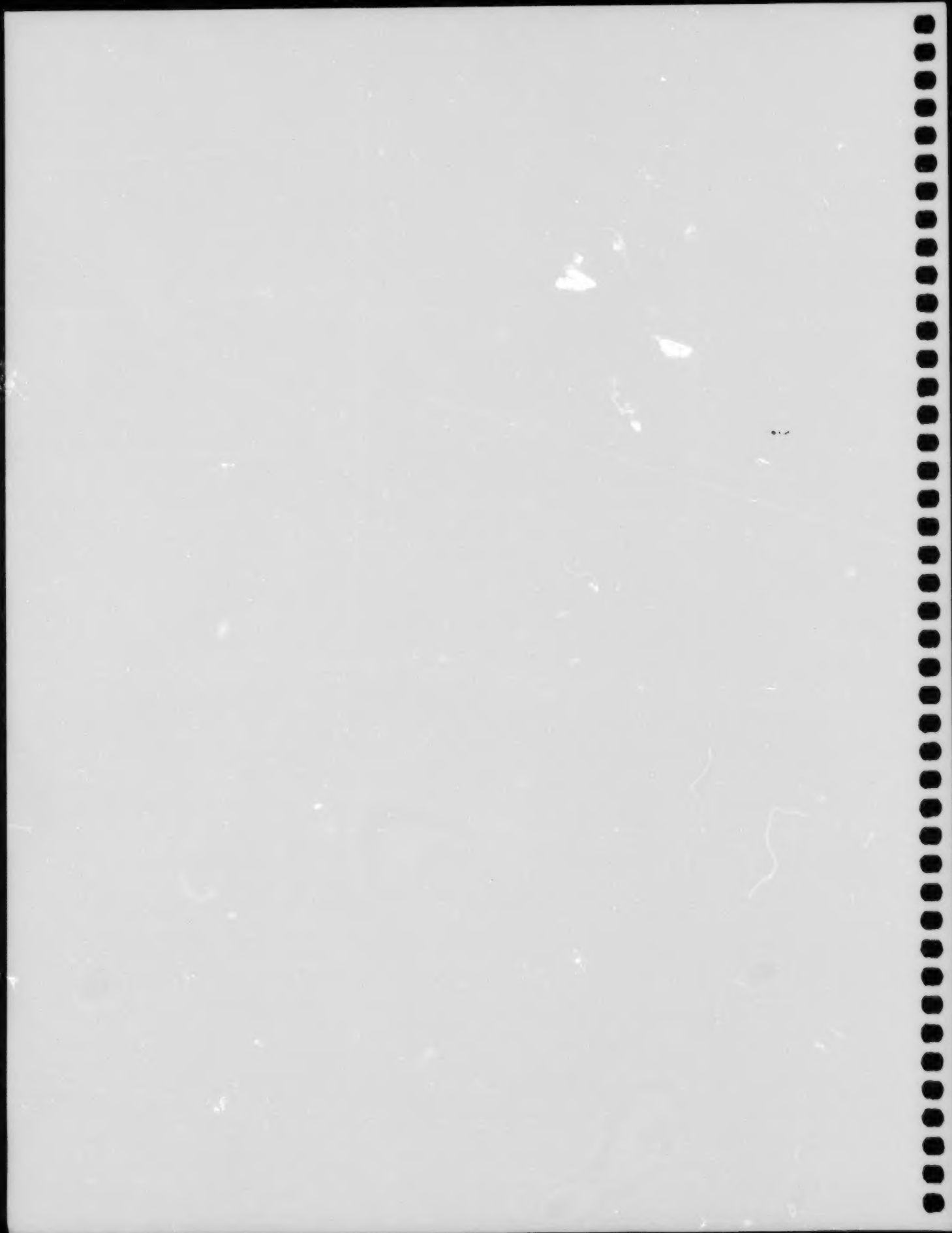


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PREFACE

The two volumes that make up the *Vision Seekers* program have been prepared to guide secondary intervention programming targeted on 12-14 year old adolescents of indigenous North American ancestry, most respectfully referred to as "first peoples," "Native North Americans," or "members of First Nations."

Vision Seekers is intended as an after-school and summer camp learning program extending, on a part-time basis, over two years of the lives of young people experiencing the initial stages of adolescence. The participant selection process is intended to ensure that all participants recruited to the program enter no sooner than three months prior to turning twelve and complete the program, at the very latest, at the mid-point of their fifteenth birthday. For a program like this to make a difference, it is essential to recruit participants before their mental, social and emotional loyalties are wholly captured by any local teen contra-culture that may exist.

Vision Seekers is intended primarily for reserve settings but it can also be offered, with modifications, in urban settings, *if* there is adequate support from appropriate social service agencies, a public (or separate) education system or a municipal recreation system (e.g., a "Parks and Recreation" department).

Program exercises in Volume 2 are linked thematically and sequentially to the after-school element of the program, as described in the core Vision Seekers' text (Volume 1). The after-school element is the core of the Vision Seekers experience and the "heart centre" of the overall program; in other words, all other elements originate, are supported by and are directly linked to the work and recreation that occurs in the after-school experience.

The fundamental purpose of the Vision Seekers program is to lower the risks for program participants of the acquisition of values, attitudes and behaviour patterns which will, predictably, severely undermine the quality of their future lives.

The program is built around personal goal-setting, an after-school programme involving purposeful, social group work and constructive recreation and support from the community, parents or other primary care givers, a Counsellor, and a School Mentor.

In addition to an intense program of learning social problem-solving and cognitive-behavioural skills, participants who stick with the program are coached and encouraged through individual and group activities aimed at promoting personal interest (hobby or career) skills, academic skills, and community-serving (altruistic) attitudes and behaviours.

The Vision Seekers program also includes one or, if possible, two summer camp experiences, which will include a *Vision Quest* experience or an alternative experiential challenge that will mark the completion of the learning journey that program participation has facilitated. Through fasting and working through a traditional or (modified) contemporary experience involving solitude and significant challenges, the youth participates in a rite of passage into a period of responsible adolescence and preparation for the challenges of adulthood.

While many of the exercises in this manual have been prepared as original material specifically for the Vision Seekers' program, many have also been derived from the work of others. Where the borrowing was largely or extensively derivative, every effort has been made to duly and gratefully acknowledge the source. It should also be noted that some of the group work exercises have been around for decades and their origins are now largely unknown: They have originated in the creative

toils of various social workers or in the "sensitivity training" or "T-group" sessions born of the human relations school of applied social-psychology. Several of these exercises have been altered in use and written description so many times that they resemble little of their original drafts; in effect, like many folk songs, they are best referred to as "traditional" and authorship can only be claimed jointly by the forgotten originator *and* by the string of people who have altered the exercises to fit their needs. In fact, the basic concepts behind many of the "original" exercises may well have first been learned by the writer at someone else's feet or from pages written by others in sources whose origins are dimmed by the fading of memory. No matter how original we would all like our work to be, few of us can with full honesty disclaim that even our finest efforts are, at best, primarily a synthesis of many things that we have learned from others.

While the exercises presented in the manual are specifically selected to key into the Vision Seekers program, they can also be used as supports for a variety of secondary prevention programs targeted on adolescents (of aboriginal ancestry or otherwise). Each of the exercises may — and *should* be — modified, if necessary, to suit the style of whoever is facilitating them, and to meet the needs of the children/youth in a program.

Hopefully, whoever reads all or part of the material in this manual will find some exercises of value in their work with troubled adolescents. Ultimately, it will be the commitment, creativity, sensitivity and skill of the Program Directors, Recreational Coordinators, and Counselors staffing local Vision Seekers' programs (and other group workers) who will make the *real* difference in the lives of these young people with such difficult beginnings.

1.0 THE VISION SEEKERS PROGRAMME: AN INTRODUCTION

The intervention program described in this book and its companion volume of learning exercises is targeted on troubled young people of indigenous North American ancestry. It is intended to provide a nurturing support system for 12-14 year old youth who are members of one of the First Nations of Canada. The program is designed as a means of facilitating the acquisition of the personal and social skills needed to survive the incapacitating risks characteristic of their distinctive experience with the turbulent years of early adolescence.

Generally considered to be synonymous with the teenage years, adolescence is commonly understood to be an exciting but difficult and often troubling experience, perhaps best characterized as a roller coaster ride of emotional and social highs and lows. Extreme confusion, identity-seeking and mercurial emotions do characterize the adolescent stage of the contemporary human life cycle. A valedictory address reflecting back on the entirety of the experience might well read: "Adolescents are driven to recklessness by the discovery of newfound freedoms, to rebellion by their transitional social status and the pressure of peers, to distraction by rampaging hormones, and to confusion by the hopes and insecurities looming in the distance from an unknown but rapidly approaching adult future."

The perspective on adolescence held by those adults of the middling years whose authoritative decisions often impact on the lives of teens tends to be a compacted one: Adolescence is conceptualized, far too neatly, as a social, psychological and intellectual bridge upon which the journey from childhood to adulthood must be taken—and convention is seen to provide all the necessary guidance and support to make the crossing.

Immersed in their own preoccupations, parents and public officials tend to lose sight of just how intense, turbulent, complex and confusing the experience of adolescence can be and just how formidable are its challenges—especially for those with the fewest advantages.

What is also remembered in later life as a tempestuous but relatively brief experience, is often experienced by the teens themselves as a journey of seemingly endless duration. Yet much like the old adage that the price of forgetting history is the repetition of its mistakes, only at their peril can parents, teachers and policy-makers ignore the significance and current realities of those bygone, youthful years.

Admittedly, teens are themselves far more likely to defeat than to promote the cause of cross-generational understanding. Why? Because adolescence is a sort of exclusive club: Only youth need apply! The last almost exclusively egocentric stage of personal development before old age, adolescence is a social-psychological space that demands the dismissal of the beliefs, values, interests, and expectations of anybody of an age group or peer group distinctively different from one's own. Whether differing opinions are held by children, other peer groups, adults or seniors, teens gradually learn to routinely dismiss as irrelevancy any viewpoint originating outside those held by their own favoured peers or pop culture idols.

Frequently, the outsiders bearing those different opinions are treated with contempt or even outright hostility. Contemporary adolescence is thus characteristically played out in a

rebellious social space that is fortified with attitudes of concrete firmness against the ready entry of outsiders, especially adults. The self-absorption, hyper-sensitivity and confusion that comes with the territory of adolescence, particularly in its early stages, allows for little room in the hearts or patience in the psyche for the concerns of adults and others not counted as peers. The tendency of teens to dismiss, react to or rebel against the interests of non-adolescents makes it very tempting for adults to *resist* any enticement to appreciate the extent to which the experience of being a teen is an all-consuming process. After all, it is very easy to react to those who seem to hold one's own very substance in contempt rather than open up to them.

Few would deny that what happens to us during our adolescent years is critical to our later success and happiness. Volumes of relevant statistics make it clear that adolescence does tend to leave its rough imprint on our later life, establishing the educational and social patterns that enable or disable our social and occupational success or failure as adults. However, the immediate needs perceived by youth are not the same as those given priority for them by adults. The gap between expectations of teens by the adult world and the priorities of adolescents themselves is particularly wide for youth raised in exceptionally stressful home environments.

The adolescent stage of personal development poses some special challenges, which tend to be especially difficult to overcome for those lacking support in the home; they include:

- the process of arriving at and dealing satisfactorily with physical sexual maturity;
- the development of individuality;
- the formation of social-emotional commitments;
- separation and autonomy from family dependency;
- the outgrowing of extreme egocentrism (an overarching preoccupation with one's own needs accompanied by little concern for those of others);
- the reconsideration of values learned in the family and in school; and
- finding a secure cultural and social identity.

By any measure, these are obviously profound transitions in the human life cycle.

1.1 ADOLESCENCE AND THE LIFE-CYCLE IN INDUSTRIAL AND POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

In preindustrial societies, there were essentially but two main stages of life: immaturity and adulthood. The change from one status to another was typically an abrupt one but it was marked by clearly defined rites of passage—initiation ceremonies involving formidable challenges that often exposed individuals to considerable pain. Such challenges typically

required great courage and involved feats of endurance. Once these rituals were completed, however, the young person was recognized as an adult, gaining the same rights and responsibilities as other mature members of the community.

Adolescence: A 'Modern' Invention

Like childhood, adolescence is a social invention. The word adolescence itself has only a century of life, coming into being as recently as the beginning of the twentieth century; it was coined to refer to the period during which economic changes demanded that the individual be involved in an extended, formal education. The word "teen" has only a few decades of common use.

In both preindustrial and early industrial societies, most people assumed adult, economic and other social roles in their pre-teen or teenage years, and marriage was common during these youthful years. The difference in industrialized and post-industrial societies is that a work force is required with members who can at least read and write—and the need for specialized, formally trained workers increases rather than decreases as technology becomes more complex, building as it does on earlier industrial achievements.

In order to function, an industrialized society requires a substantial number of professionals and technicians with highly sophisticated skills that can be applied to the economic production and distribution process. An educational system with significantly prolonged participation periods therefore became necessary. Once established as an institution, an extended, formal education became as fundamental to the structure of society as the family unit. Universal schooling and its adult extensions in technical institutes and universities created changes in the statuses and roles of those who remained in school.

The social revolution that accompanies industrialization adds what amounts to a new stage in the human life cycle: Instead of shifting directly from prolonged infancy or childhood to adulthood, the individual in the industrialized society goes through a transitional period in his or her own personal and social development. While physically and sexually mature (or in the early stages of physical maturation), adolescents are now denied any significant social authority or responsibility. Typically, such roles as fully employed worker, family manager or community leader must wait at least until the beginnings of adulthood. The law itself demands certain age minimums as criterion for various rights, from the right to independently buy a car, to drive a car, vote, enter various types of post-secondary education or training, secure employment, enter the military, or to independently secure credit.

At the turn of the century less than ten percent of adolescents in the general population of industrializing societies who entered high school matriculated (graduated from the final grade of secondary school), in most industrialized nations that figure rose to at least 80 percent by the fourth quarter of the 20th century. In lengthening the lifespan and extending the length of the formal education required to secure employment — and university and other post-school education is rapidly replacing high school as the minimal completion requirement for job acquisition — society has created a wide and lengthy social-psychological frontier

between childhood and adulthood.

Contradictions in Roles and Enticements

Adolescence is not an inherently ambiguous and confusing experience; it has this quality *because*, historically, it is a relatively new stage of the life cycle and because it has been established in societies in which the pace of change is faster than ever before. As a sociological phenomenon, adolescence is marked by vaguely defined roles and responsibilities. The socialization process equips the individual poorly for the years of youth, persistently sending contradictory messages to which the adolescent must decode and respond. For example, while the media promotes the virtues of sexual satisfaction and encourages the acquisition of luxurious material goods, adolescents are encouraged by their parents to postpone sexual activity. Typically, youth have the financial capacity to make but few of the purchases that an ever more effective advertising industry so unrelentingly tempts them with through the print and electronic media. It is because of these contradictions and the fact that they have more freedom than children but less than adults that adolescents are almost routinely tempted to test or at least question the authority of parents and teachers.

The Power of Peer Groups and 'Reference' Groups

Despite the attempts by parents and the legally mandated attempts by school authorities to give structure and order to the lives of adolescents, the division of authority over the adolescent between the juvenile, his or her parents and the school, has the effect of creating weakened authority guidelines. It also creates ambiguity and confusion for the adolescent. Consequently, when constructing the psychological and social foundation of their transient adolescent identities and their gradually emerging adult personalities and lifestyles, teens often perceive that they are essentially left to their own devices and to the influences of peers and the media. To find their own way out of this confusion, teens become preoccupied with active social experimentation and bonding with other teens and peer groups. By its very nature, the potentially isolated experience that makes up the adolescent journey requires that the teen desperately seek social and symbolic allies amongst other teens.

Alone or with their peers as allies, adolescents also spend a considerable amount of their energies testing the boundaries of their freedom from the directions of parents and teachers.

The Reference Group and the 'Teen Market'

Almost with a vengeance the adolescent in contemporary society also embraces what sociologists call the *reference group*. The term refers to an abstraction rather than a group of real people with which one is normally in frequent personal contact. It is an idealized image of a peer group with which one wishes to identify—a set of ideas, values and lifestyles that an individual imitates in constructing her own attitudes and behaviours.

Increasingly, the adolescent journey to adulthood is one that is mediated by a peer subculture which is, in turn, powerfully influenced and manipulated by commercial vendors of entertainment, gossip, lifestyles, sport and apparel, all assisted by a media and entertainment industry and highly sophisticated mass marketing companies. This communications web, which transmits idealized images of what the youth of different academic, athletic, social and economic backgrounds "typically" want and desire, can be overwhelming.

Magazines, television and movies send continuous and constantly modified signals to teens. Media messages attempt to define what adolescents should look like in terms of hairstyles, clothing and other bodily adornments—and what they should think like, talk like, act like, as well as with whom they should or should not associate with and by what or whom they should be entertained. The "wrong" athletic shoes, designer jeans, or choice of music can invite ridicule, scorn, downward social mobility or outright exclusion from a teen's preferred peers.

These reference groups, which are constructed from interpretations by the media of what is "cool" in New York or Los Angeles, in the ghetto or in Hollywood, have come to play an increasingly important role in the shaping of youth culture throughout North America and, indeed, throughout the Western world and beyond. It has been observed that there are children in African villages who have never owned a pair of shoes who dream of 'Nikes.'

Creating Openings in Adult/Teen Boundaries Before the 'Generation Gap' Sets In

Segregated from other age groups and absorbing an ever-changing concept of self identity from the trends reflected in the media, the adolescent typically experiences a profound sense of personal distance from her parents. So typical in Western society is the cooling of relations between parents and their adolescent children that it gave birth to the phrase, the *generation gap*, a term that is now so common that it is now considered a cliché. Yet the reality of the generation gap does often reflect a remarkably intense personal distance between parents and older children as they approach their teenage years. Unfortunately, if the distance is wide in the years leading up to adolescence, it is very hard to close the gap after the onset of the teenage years.

As children begin the adolescent journey with the turbulent and confusing onset of puberty, they are experiencing a life transition that has all the earmarks of the definition given to a crisis in the old Chinese proverb: It is a time of both danger and opportunity.

Early adolescence is a period during which the probability that a child will establish anti-social and/or self-destructive behaviour patterns is extremely high; it is also, simultaneously, a time when the very confusion of early adolescence combines with the last residues of the openness and inquisitiveness of childhood to make the early teen very impressionable—an excellent candidate for not only negative role modelling but positive role modelling as well.

The program described in this book is an attempt to stimulate constructive intervention by adults with 12-14 year old youth otherwise destined for a lifetime of considerable difficulties.

1.2 ADOLESCENT RISKS

A review of the relevant literature indicates that, to experience adolescence in Canada is:

- to be at far greater risk than other age groups of experiencing an automobile accident;
- to be at high risk of establishing a substance abuse pattern that persists for a substantial period of one's life;
- to be at a much higher risk of being a victim or perpetrator of several types of interpersonal violence;
- to be in an age group that is significantly more likely than other age groups to attempt and to complete suicide attempts;
- to be increasingly at risk of becoming a member of the "economically unsettled," with the prospects of permanent employment pushed further and further on to the horizon.

1.3 THE STRENGTHS OF ADOLESCENCE

The adolescent is not without defences against the special risks they encounter. As a general stage of personal development, adolescence is a period which tends to provide those experiencing it with specific strengths—and those strengths are critical to building any significant secondary intervention program. Some of the strengths of adolescents include the following (See Ferrara, 1992):

- ☐ *Adaptability.* By the early teens, the adolescent personality remains in a process of development. The child/youth has not yet developed a permanent way of thinking and relating to others. It is because of the tentative and exploratory nature of the personality at this age that intervention can have such a positive impact in terms of altering his or her outlook and behaviour. As the months of adolescence pass, the malleability of the youth shrinks and personality and behaviour characteristics crystallize into inflexible patterns—including patterns that reflect anti-social or self-destructive attitudes and behaviours.
- ☐ *Imitation.* The fact is that adolescence is a period during which various forms of identity are experimented with. Group counselling and individual counselling, as well as exposures to positive role models, can therefore have a great deal of influence.
- ☐ *Values.* Adolescents tend to be very idealistic. The fact that their values are in the process of full, basic formation tends to mean that their exposure to positive values can have a significant long-term influence on them.
- ☐ *Intimacy.* The onset of adolescence brings with it a willingness to experiment with intimacy beyond their contacts with their parents. Young adolescents are discovering choices in their intimacy for the first time. They want to explore intimacy with friends and

members of the opposite sex—even to some extent with parents. This need for intimacy makes them especially open to influence.

In summary, young adolescents are ripe for influence as they struggle to establish their own personalities, their values and their approach to intimacies. For troubled adolescents with difficult home lives or backgrounds, influences in their immediate social environment all too frequently give shape to anti-social or self-destructive attitudes, behaviours and personality formation. Vision Seekers is an attempt to deliberately upset the balance of negative social-environmental influences in favour of artificially substituted, positive influences.

1.4 THINKING STYLES AND BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS THAT DISCOURAGE HEALTHY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

A useful definition of *responsibility* can be simply stated as meeting one's own needs while not preventing other people from meeting theirs. Adolescents caught up in an individual or subcultural orientation that is either socially neutral (unattached and sceptical of the social mainstream), self-destructive, or antisocial, typically reject consistent, responsible behaviour—sometimes in the extreme. Responsible behaviour is perceived as a betrayal of the fundamental principle of being marginal to society. For many adolescents, being responsible is to be "square," "straight," and simply not exciting enough. But merely telling a resistant adolescent that he *should* be responsible has little positive impact. In fact, admonishing adolescents can be self-defeating. It often triggers further or more irresponsible behaviour.

Adolescents must be *taught* to be responsible. In turn, responsibility is not simply an attitude nourished in a set of ethics; it is something that must be understood and treated as a *skill*, which is a capacity that troubled adolescents often lack.

Troubled adolescents tend to avoid thinking about the *long-term consequences* of their behaviour for themselves and others; typically, when considering the effects of their actions on others, the more troubled adolescent tends to have an extremely short time horizon.

Troubled adolescents often develop survival skills long before acquiring adequate interpersonal skills; consequently, their typical manner of satisfying needs often results in others being exploited or hurt.

The troubled youth tends to ignore the needs of others or fails to develop an empathetic sensitivity to the hurtful consequences of her actions on others. This *lack of empathy* functions to sustain self-destructive or anti-social behaviours. How? By "cooling out" one's capacity for taking the role of others, it is possible to hurt and exploit them without paying the emotional debt that empathy normally carries with it.

Empathy can only begin to be nurtured when the troubled adolescent begins to examine his/her past actions; it is through such examination that s/he comes to realize how others have

suffered.

Troubled adolescents are often *counterdependent*, which means that, because they have not been shown that they can rely upon their own caregivers, they have learned to be "defiant loners," choosing not to depend on anyone. Such adolescents often choose to reject intimacy and the attempts of others to be supportive. If they accept intimacy, it is often only with one person.

As discussed above, troubled adolescents also tend to reject authority, responding with defiance to instructions or orders from authority figures, even if the authority is exercised in a balanced, fair and reasonable way.

Troubled adolescents are also frequently characterized by specific thinking problems, including:

- ☐ *Failure to Learn from Others.* The troubled adolescent often fails to make connections between the positive behaviours of others, particularly problem-solving methods, and his/her own behaviour. Typically, other than a select few, the behaviour of others is usually dismissed as irrelevant to the adolescent's own situation.
- ☐ *Failure to Learn from Experience.* The troubled adolescent also tends not to see the connection between past experiences and present situations. Problem-solving actions in the past are not recalled to apply to the present. Often, when the past is remembered, what is remembered is emotional pain, which becomes a trigger for "acting out" behaviour—against himself or others.
- ☐ *Undeveloped Problem-solving Skills.* Troubled adolescents tend to be impulsive. Even though they may have a reasonable understanding of how to manage a particular situation or solve a particular problem, she or he tends not to preplan and weigh alternatives. The tendency for them is to jump into action or simply withdraw and retreat from trying. Not thinking the problem through and selecting amongst alternatives is typical.
- ☐ *Fragmentation.* Inconsistencies in the troubled adolescent's behaviour tend to reflect inconsistencies in her thinking. Her world view is fragmented. She may argue for a specific principle as it applies in one situation (e.g., adolescents being protected against the coercive interventions of teachers when they act out) but not in another (e.g., laws to protect drivers from coercive selling tactics of "Squeegee kids"). Although these inconsistencies appear obvious to other people, the troubled teen often cannot see them. This enables competing beliefs to cancel each other out. The child may sincerely wish to be nice and be seen to be nice but his desire to be seen as an important person, "somebody to be reckoned with" and "cool," allows him to be exploitative. The troubled teen would not see this as an inconsistency.

Troubled adolescents also have a battery of defences that help them cope. These defences may help them cope but they are also obstacles to positive change. Unfortunately, these coping strategies often create greater problems for the troubled adolescent than the problems

that brought them to social development or child welfare agencies. Let us consider some of these defensive, change-limiting behaviours.

Troubled adolescents who have acted out in antisocial ways or who have become withdrawn, passive and unmotivated, will adopt a victim's stance. S/he is a victim: a victim of an unjust society; a victim of a set of uncaring parents, etc. Whereas there is probably some truth to the assertion that s/he is a victim, the troubled adolescent will often use the excuse that his or her personal injuries from the past provide justification for present acts of antisocial behaviour. Essentially, this stance is adopted as a way of excusing morally or legally unacceptable behaviours. At its root is the strategy of blaming others for one's own behaviours, a posture which serves as a defence against being judged poorly by others and against owning up to one's own responsibilities. It is a strategy that is very difficult yet essential to deal with if one is to help an adolescent grow out of a self-destructive or antisocial behaviour pattern.

In a group setting, many troubled adolescents will often choose silence when they are vulnerable or feel cornered, perpetually acting emotionally "hard to get." Group facilitators must learn to deal with this silence and gradually diminish its usage because, ultimately, it simply obstructs the overall and specific goals of the group process. It must also be recognized that the sullen withdrawal of adolescents who have a degree of prestige in the group are modelling behaviours that others will imitate unless it is checked. There can also be a "conspiracy of silence" which totally excludes the group facilitator and, ultimately, the very purpose of the group Vision Seekers program.

Another defence is the "safety in numbers" or "gang protection defence." Troubled adolescents will tend to seek out children with a similar attitude towards other teens and towards authority figures. There is more than a little truth to the old adage, s/he had problems but didn't get in any real trouble until s/he started "hanging out with the wrong crowd."

Many troubled adolescents become so committed to their universe of peers that accepting attachment of any kind to non-peers is very difficult for them. They often develop a sense of cohesion around subcultural or gang values and they are ostracized by their peer group if they do not adhere to the influence and norms of their chosen peer group. The fact that these groups often provide them with the only meaningful relationships they have and often act as their physical protectors means that their attachment to peers must be understood and taken very seriously, even if it promotes acting out or delinquent behaviours.

It is often the peer group that encourages delinquent behaviour. Frequently, adolescents will act out simply to gain acceptance or enhanced prestige or status within the peer group. The opposite behaviour, which is the avoidance of responsible people, is also counterproductive to the troubled adolescent's personal development.

An adolescent who is experiencing some mild academic frustrations at school or has had some difficulty forming meaningful friendships may be greatly relieved upon discovering that a caring person or well-adjusted peer group is accepting of them.

By contrast, when given an opportunity to befriend a responsible peer or non-deviant peer

group, many troubled adolescents will actually react with heightened defensiveness. Why? Because responsible and caring people represent a threat to the values and norms of the marginal, socially defiant peer group with which the troubled adolescent seeks a core social identity.

Another common defensive response for a troubled adolescent is the opposite of a blatant rejection of responsible people and responsible action. Some troubled adolescents, especially those who are shy, will simply withdraw from active participation with peers or just "hang in," taking virtually no responsibility for the actions of the group. Others will develop highly manipulative coping strategies; in a structured group setting, they will be overly agreeable with the group leaders, essentially hiding their true intentions or actions from the group worker and the group. This form of denial is also a fundamental obstruction of the very purpose of the group process.

1.5 ABORIGINAL ADOLESCENTS

For aboriginal adolescents in Canada, the teenage years are typically far more turbulent and confusing than they are for non-aboriginals, for the cultures, languages and economies of their ancestors have been largely displaced by the ideas, technologies and habitats of a dominant society made up of relative newcomers to North America. Admittedly, recent years have reflected a more enlightened approach by governments in Canada to aboriginal social and economic development. Recent progress aside, historically, Euro-Canadian policy-makers have made several unsuccessful attempts to assimilate the original North Americans into the Canadian mainstream. Yet, in truth, Canadian "Indian policy" has never reflected a serious attempt to integrate first peoples into the mainstream economy in a way that preserves their dignity as distinctive peoples with their own proud heritage.

Despite the longstanding preoccupation of politicians with the issue of potential Quebec separation, the failure of Canada's "Indian policy" stands out as the single most unsuccessful element of her otherwise remarkably successful record of social integration through national policy formation. Inevitably, the grim legacy of that outstanding failure is one of high and growing social costs for which both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations have and will continue to pay for over many decades into the future.

The *Vision Seekers* program described in this book is especially targeted on aboriginal adolescents at high risk of acquiring self-destructive and/or anti-social behaviour patterns that continue on into adulthood. Although it can be easily adapted to the urban context, the program is primarily geared to those aboriginal youth who are living in communities on reserve lands and who can benefit from a program of disciplined support and guidance in making the transition from childhood to full adolescence. It can also be adopted for at-risk youth of any cultural or socio-economic background, although various practical adjustments to the realities, norms and values of these other locales would be required.

The *Vision Seekers*' program cannot "cure" the social ills of reserve or inner-city communities; it is but one strategy in what must be a large but compatible arsenal of policy

and programming weapons in the community development efforts of governments and First Nations themselves.

The Vision Seekers' program is a timely intervention into the lives of young adolescents, intended to both reduce the social and physical risks they encounter by fostering positive motivation and to facilitate the acquisition of practical and social skills. It is aimed at the early adolescent of aboriginal ancestry whom, in the absence of intervention, will almost surely develop a pattern of self-destructive or socially destructive behaviour.

In addition to the usual turmoil of adolescence and the understandable anxiety of youth in the face of the uncertainty of long-term employment prospects, adolescence is a period of personal development in which many health risk factors are elevated.

1.5.1 - SOCIAL RISK LEVELS AND ABORIGINAL ADOLESCENTS

For aboriginal teens in Canada, the youthful journey across the bridge to adulthood tends to be an especially trying, painful and risky one, all too frequently involving mistakes that result in a closure on those advantages conferred by the affluent society—those elusive rewards that are supposed to be waiting on the other side of the bridge from childhood.

While adolescence is a period of heightened social risk, it also contains the potential for youth to seize great opportunities and, in so doing, establish a clear, positive direction for the future. Unfortunately, too many aboriginal North American children are never exposed to those opportunities. Vision Seekers is an attempt to overcome that deficiency of opportunity.

Escaping the turmoil of adolescence with the support of personal self-esteem, a strong moral code, social attachment and solid educational and employment preparedness credentials, can never be ensured. Yet with proper guidance, wise instruction and loving support, the potential is great for an adolescent to escape the hazards of youthful experimentation, confusion, anger and recklessness. It should also be remembered that, to be young and reasonably healthy in Canada, is to have far better prospects than the youth of most nations in the world—and that comparison holds, even for aboriginal adolescents.

It must also be recognized that to experience adolescence in Canada as an aboriginal youth is to experience significantly greater than average risks to one's health and social well-being. It is also to be at significantly greater risk than non-aboriginal youth of becoming an abuser of alcohol and drugs, including solvents.

The likelihood of dropping out of school, of facing a lifetime of unemployment or underemployment is also far greater for aboriginal youth than other adolescents.

The likelihood of engaging in interpersonal violence and other forms of antisocial behaviour, including crimes against property, of attempting and succeeding in suicide and homicide, and in producing unwanted children through the practice of unprotected sex is also much greater for aboriginal youth than for non-aboriginals.

Aboriginal adolescents are also at much higher risk of engaging in *self-destructive* behaviour

patterns. These behaviours include suicide, the ultimate act of self-destruction, self-scarring, and a pattern of reckless activity that pays little heed to personal safety. Speeding while joyriding, driving under-age or while impaired come immediately to mind and sniffing glue, gas and other volatile substances must also be included in this latter category because they are potentially so lethal.

Young aboriginal females are also at particularly high risk of suffering the personal and transgenerational consequences of sexual exploitation through prostitution and unprotected, early sexual activity.

1.6 VISION SEEKERS AS A RISK-REDUCTION STRATEGY

The *Vision Seekers* program is an approach to reducing health risks and promoting positive personal development amongst predictably anti-social or self-destructive young people by intervening in their lives at the outset of their adolescent experience.

While the primary focus of the program is on the early adolescent members of First Nations' Reserve communities in Canada, it is a program that can be adapted to the realities of urban Indians and non-Indian youth as well.

Vision Seekers draws upon both the general research literature on adolescence and social intervention programming for them, as well as written material and qualitative and quantitative research focussed specifically on aboriginal youth. Fundamentally, the program builds upon the strengths of adolescence described above in order to overcome those defences, also described above, which function effectively in the short-term but are dysfunctional in the long-term.

The Vision Seekers' program has grown out of the author's early experience with alternative youth services for marginal teens, as well as two decades of consulting in the community health and social development field with First Nations and Metis people. The program has been influenced by dozens of community health studies and countless discussions, consultations, interviews and observations with Native health workers, leaders and adolescents.

It should also be acknowledged at the outset that the program proposed below is also heavily indebted to the social development model most clearly and fully described in the book *Communities that Care* (1992), by J. David Hawkins and Richard F. Catalano, Jr. and their associates at the University of Washington in Seattle. From Hawkins, Catalano and their colleagues, the Vision Seekers program derives the simple premise: If we want to prevent a pattern of human problems through policy and programming interventions, we must identify those factors which increase the chance of the occurrence of that problem and then find ways to reduce those "risk factors."

The Vision Seekers program is also influenced by the *Rites of Passage Experience Program* (ROPE) developed by David Blumenkrantz of Connecticut and described in the book *Fulfilling the Promise of Children's Services* (1992). The author benefited from lengthy

discussions with David when he worked briefly as an advisor with the Battlefords Tribal Council Indian Health Service (BTCIHS) in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, in the early 1990s. David had been invited to assist with the introduction of the program as part of the Tribal Council's overall community health development efforts. Influenced by the ROPE program, Vision Seekers' emphasizes drawing from indigenous cultural traditions and creating contemporary equivalents to the traditional rites of passage that once demarcated the transition to adulthood for the youth of all traditional cultures, including those of the first peoples of North America. David's emphasis on researching the type of group experiences and personal challenges that are locally and culturally meaningful to the participants, as well as the idea of in-school mentor supports, are also central elements of the Vision Seekers' program.

A great debt is also owing to Matthew L. Ferrara for his outline of the "limit and lead" approach to social group work with children highly resistant to authority (Ferrara, 1992).

As stated above, the influence on the program of non-aboriginal researchers and, indeed, the non-aboriginal ethnicity of the author, may be a source of concern to some aboriginal peoples. This concern may be sufficiently strong that the program ideas presented will be rejected. Those aboriginal community workers and educators who are reluctant to consider a program developed by a non-aboriginal person for use in their own community should recognize that Vision Seekers can be treated in several ways.

The text and the group exercises in Vision Seekers can obviously be used as a detailed program planning guide; they can also provide a general framework for program action but be adapted and liberally altered to meet local needs and preferences— or they can simply be used as two volumes of reference reading to be borrowed from on an as-needed basis.

It should also be recognized that, rather than being a wholly "imposed" program, Vision Seekers has been heavily influenced by the author's direct experience with First Nations. The camp experience and some of the after-school exercises are drawn from or influenced by Thom Henley's book *Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways, New Directions* (1989), which draws on the traditions of various aboriginal cultures in shaping wilderness environmental and cultural learning experiences for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal youth. Finally, the book (and program) actively invites the systematic integration of local cultural traditions into each community-based, program development process.

Vision Seekers may also result in a greater knowledge of First Nations' traditions on the part of aboriginal staff. When seeking out local traditions for inclusion into the program, those staff using Vision Seekers as a guide may actually wind up triggering a burst of enthusiasm for knowledge of traditional cultures. More important than teaching the teachers, however, the implementation of the Vision Seekers program should serve to enrich the knowledge and understanding of participants in the traditional, local customs and beliefs of their own heritage. Hopefully, the program will encourage communities to develop a cross-cultural knowledge base and appreciation of other, Western cultures.

For non-aboriginal participants, the Vision Seekers program provides an opportunity to gain

an appreciation of various aspects of Indian cultures and contemporary realities.

The Vision Seekers program is premised on the belief that high levels of adolescent social risk add up to an enormous public burden for both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations. Those costs are associated with violent crime, crimes against property, school failure and school drop-out, insufficient skills to enter the work force, and unplanned adolescent childbearing. The typical, long-term consequence of high social risk levels is an unacceptable, sub-standard level of social and physical health standards for the targeted adolescents. Our common stake in preventing such outcomes of high risk adolescence is enormous. In the absence of effective prevention, we all pay over the long term, and in spades. We pay to support the unproductive, to incarcerate the violent, and to use our emergency wards, child protection services and transition houses to mop up the damage that the troubled or antisocial adult leaves in his (and, less frequently, her) wake. This is hardly a desirable set of outcomes for any individual or group constituting the fabric of Canada's multicultural society.

Research has shown that causal elements of any set of negative social outcomes for a specific population group are numerous and interrelated. However, as evaluation researchers have long since realized, not every contributing factor must be changed before incidence levels can be reduced. Available research is now sufficiently abundant, scientifically valid and reliable for us to identify a wide variety of preventable risk factors for children in industrialized societies that we know are associated with later, damaging outcomes.

Tragically, in the aboriginal communities across Canada, the existence of elevated social risks is so pervasive that only a dramatically increased national policy commitment in the form of fundamental social, educational and economic policy initiatives will set us on the right course of prevention and remedial change. The question remains, however: *Can anything of value be done before those fundamental changes take place that are necessary to cut out the sociological roots of the problem?* By advocating such programming as Vision Seekers, this author is saying yes! If program recruits are strategically selected to include *both* youth who either exhibit the greatest need or who can potentially exert the most influence on his or her peers, the programming advocated in this book can make a difference. It can facilitate significant, positive changes not only in the lives of the participants but also in the well-being of the adolescent segment of the community as a whole. And yes, it can do so, even in the absence of major, fundamental change to the environment inhabited by troubled aboriginal adolescents. Yet programs such as Vision Seekers are not opposed to fundamental social change; rather, it should simply be viewed as an integral element of the fundamental macro-policy initiatives that are required to intervene in the plight of aboriginal peoples generally.

1.6.1 - PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Vision Seekers program is built around the following elements:

- a *strategic participant selection process* that includes the *systematic identification* of high social risk (HSR) pre- and early adolescent children and the conscious selection of some youth who exert significant social influence on their peers;

- *family and individual counselling* for all participants with a counsellor working in affiliation with the program but in a separate location from the group programming.
- *Vision Seeker Treaties* that unite participating teens, their parents or custodians, program staff and community leaders in a formal commitment for achieving and supporting the teen's personal and academic program goals
- the core of the program, which is an *after-school recreational, personal development and social learning program* centred on a *structured social group work process*, and also a *community service activity* and a *recreational program* and *Kid-Rap*, a group problem-solving circle.
- an *in-school mentor* support program
- a *security circle* emergency assistance program
- participation in a *summer camp* that includes a *vision quest* or equivalent personal challenge experience
- a *special needs supplement service*
- the *Vision Seekers Information Exchange*.

1.6.2 - SOCIAL GROUP WORK: THE PROGRAM'S CORE METHODOLOGY

The core methodology in the Vision Seekers program is derived directly from applied social psychology and social group work (i.e., clinical social work). Group counselling is the methodology of choice because it has a number of positive attributes that can make it an approach of choice for dealing with a variety of issues (Dagley, Gazda, and Pistole, 1986: 137-138); these include:

1. A group offers each individual member the opportunity to test his or her own self-perceptions against reality.
2. Distorted perceptions and false assumptions of both self and others may become more apparent and lose their value.
3. Groups may provide a sense of psychological safety to support the elimination of self-defeating thoughts and behaviours.
4. Groups can approximate real-life interaction situations, thus providing members with chances to try out new behaviours in a safe environment.
5. Groups of some duration offer individuals reinforcement for personal changes.
6. The responses of others can help an individual to appreciate the universality of some personal concerns.
7. Members can increase their ability to give and solicit appropriate self-disclosures and feedback.

8. Interaction with others in a group can enhance one's empathy and concern about social issues.
9. Groups encourage tolerance for others: They have unique ways of helping members develop a deeper understanding and acceptance of individual differences.
10. Consistent feedback from others in a group can enhance a person's accuracy of communication.

1.7 SUMMARY

Adolescence is an emotionally confusing and volatile segment of contemporary life, a time of great social risk, especially for those of Aboriginal ancestry. The Vision Seekers program, targeted on young, at-risk adolescents of Aboriginal ancestry living on First Nations' reserves and, secondarily, in inner city environments, is designed to substantially reduce the very high risk factors routinely associated with the daily living experiences of these youth.

The core intervention methodology is a social group work approach, situated in an after-school program also comprised of academic goal-pursuit supported by an in-school mentor, recreational programming and hobby/interest skill development. Involvement in a community service activity and a summer camp experience that includes a Vision Quest (or equivalent) are also important aspects of the program.

An Author's Note to the Reader

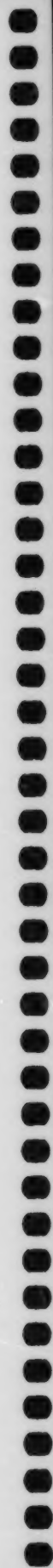
Most readers will find that there is extensive background material to plow through before getting to the material on the program description and the mechanics of its implementation. If impatience rules, then by all means jump over the theoretical and background information to get right to the nuts-and-bolts of the program materials. But it is important to come back to it before actually starting your program! Whether you read it at the front end or after jumping to the practical, descriptive materials, the important thing is that you do read the introductory and background materials that are intended to set the stage for the program.

The background material has been included for several reasons, *not* just to fill the pages with academic fodder. It is included to help orient program staff to the special needs and problems of young adolescents in contemporary society. It is also included to assist staff in their understanding of *why* adolescents of First Nations ancestry are, with such disproportionate frequency, at high social risk.

The review of *causes* of high social risk rates among aboriginal adolescents is extensive. It seeks to explain the special difficulties facing adolescents of aboriginal ancestry in contemporary Canadian (and North American) society. The section should be treated both as an orientation to the program and as a reference source for staff trying to understand the nature of the problems presented by the participating "Vision Seekers" during the course of their involvement in the program. Frequently, problems overwhelm and staff frustration with

the behaviour of troubled adolescents can easily turn into anger and resentment of the children themselves. The material in Chapter 3 can be treated as an aid to reflection during times of frustration. It can be used when staff decide to stand back to create some emotional distance and ask themselves *why* the participants act like they do and why programs like Vision Seekers are needed. In short, it should help to lend some perspective to some very challenging human service work.

The background material also contains a fully articulated *rationale* for the design of the program. It is the author's belief that *people delivering programs should clearly know why they are doing what they are doing*. Boards and staff should also know the program concept in some depth. Only in this way can they gain confidence that the elements themselves and the mix of elements as a whole makes sense.



2.0 A FOCUS ON ADOLESCENTS AT CRITICAL SOCIAL RISK

As any insurance salesperson or actuary will readily confirm, when compared with other age groups, adolescence is an especially risky period of the modern human life cycle. In exploring their newfound freedoms, adolescents experiment with a wide variety of life-threatening, health-threatening and potentially opportunity-limiting behaviours. These normative, yet risky, behaviours include experiments with the ingestion of alcohol, drugs and even inhaled solvents to the point of impairment, unsafe sex, physical violence, reckless driving (or, for younger teens, accompanying older teens), shop-lifting, vandalism and other minor delinquencies, dropping out of school and running away from home. This section will describe the concept *critical social risk* and summarize the relevant research dealing with elevated social risks amongst adolescents.

The concept of an *adolescent at critical social risk* refers to a youth encompassed by personal and social circumstances that will, predictably, lead to serious injuries to him/herself or others or to an established, long-term pattern of self-destructive or anti-social attitudes and behaviours. The term is employed in the *Vision Seekers* program to refer to a child who is judged by a panel of knowledgeable community health and social development workers to exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

1. a pattern of early or frequent substance abuse (drugs, alcohol and solvents);
2. a reputation amongst teachers, health, social service workers or police, and peers for exhibiting an antisocial orientation and behaviour pattern;
3. exhibition of self-destructive behaviour tendencies, including, threats of suicide;
4. a pattern of engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse in a context which places the adolescent and his/her partner(s) at high risk of unwanted pregnancies and/or AIDS.

These factors have been culled from an extensive review of the relevant research literature on predictors of adolescent personal and social problems. Let us examine the findings of that literature.

2.1 FACTORS PREDICTIVE OF ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DELINQUENCY

The research findings that can be used to help identify youth who are at high risk of becoming substance abusers and delinquents remain in need of substantially more clarity for interventionists to be entirely confident in their attempts to single specific children out for targeted programming. Even less is known about *why* some youths in high risk environments avoid substance abuse problems. Yet despite the limits of the available evidence, considerable progress has been made in this area. Not surprisingly, the relevant research indicates that population groups at high risk include the economically disadvantaged; school dropouts; children of an alcoholic (Alcohol Dependency Disordered [ADS]) parent (or parents); the mentally ill; suicidal, pregnant teenagers; the homeless and runaways (McIntyre and White, 1988).

Factors that appear to protect children from acquiring the substance abuse problems of their parents may include the ability to stand away from a troubled parent; a strong self-concept; an internal locus of control; scepticism about the parental world view; and at least one good parental relationship (McIntyre and White, 1988).

Some writers believe that, while there are numerous pathways to substance abuse, rather than any one risk factor being a reliable signpost, it is the increased exposure to any one factor or to a variety of factors that is most predictive of substance abuse and delinquency. In other words, continuously increased exposure to one factor, such as ready, uncontrolled availability will predictably lead to substance abuse amongst adolescents, as will exposure to a large number of factors associated with substance abuse (See Newcomb, Maddahian *et al.* (1987); Newcomb, Maddahian and Bentler, 1986; and Tarter, 1988).

Based on their own research and the research of Kandel, Simcha-Fagan, and Davis (1986), Newcomb, Maddahian and Bentler (1986), and Simcha-Fagan, Gersten and Langner (1986), Hawkins, Catelano and their colleagues (1992) have identified two primary lists of risk factors for adolescent substance abuse. Most of these factors are also predictors of juvenile delinquency. One of these general sources of risk is located in the broad social context in which people develop (i.e., the general social environment), such as the neighbourhood and community; others include the family system, the school and peers. A summary of these findings is provided below:

1. Environmental Risk Factors

- *Economic and Social Deprivation.* Those children who reside in socially deteriorating, crime-ridden neighbourhoods are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours than those from more stable neighbourhoods where criminality is far less active. They are also more likely to engage in substance abuse later on.
- *Low Neighbourhood Attachment and Community Disorganization.* Children are at greater risk if they live in communities or neighbourhoods in which residents have a very limited interest in or involvement with the community. Other environmental risk factors that are community-related include a lack of strong social institutions attracting participation and local loyalties, and communities with lower levels of security surveillance also tend to have higher rates of adult and juvenile crime and drug trafficking.
- *Transitions and Mobility.* When children make transitions from one level of schooling to another, the process of transition makes its emotional mark, sometimes negatively. There is a statistical relationship between such transitions and problem behaviours. When children move a lot between communities and from school to school, they also have a greater risk of acquiring a drug problem and engaging in delinquencies and antisocial behaviour patterns generally.
- *Community Laws and Norms.* When community standards and laws are favourable to alcohol and drug use or when community leaders pay little attention to these problems or other patterns of delinquency, young people are at higher risk of becoming involved in delinquency and drug abuse.

- *Availability.* Just as the historical increase in the availability of portable goods has been shown to correlate with an increase in property theft, so the increasing availability of alcohol or drugs in a community and amongst peers increases the likelihood that young people will abuse drugs.
- 2. Risk Factors specific to the Individual and his/her Primary relationships (Family, School, Peer Group)**
- *Family History of Alcohol Abuse Problems.* If children are born or raised in a family with a history of alcohol abuse problems, their own risk of having alcohol or other drug problems is higher than if they were raised in families without such problems. This risk is particularly high for boys.
 - *Early Aggressiveness.* Boys who were aggressive in kindergarten through the third grade of school have been found to be at higher risk for later substance abuse than boys without such an early show of aggressive behaviour. This risk increases if that early aggression is combined with either extreme shyness or hyperactivity.
 - *Parental Tolerance for or Positive Attitudes towards Illegal Drugs or Heavy Alcohol Use* increases the likelihood, probably through modelling, of children becoming drug users in adolescence.
 - *Academic Failure.* Beginning in the late elementary school grades, academic failure increases the risk of both drug abuse and delinquency. While it is true that children fail for many reasons, the experience of failure increases the risk of problem behaviours.
 - *Low Commitment to School* is also a risk factor associated with both academic failure and drug use and delinquency in adolescence.
 - *Alienation or Rebelliousness.* Children who experience alienation and become rebellious in their behaviour patterns are at high risk of drug abuse and anti-social behaviour. Not seeing themselves as part of their school social network or their community, they often do not see themselves as being bound by its rules.
 - *Conflict with Peers, School Misbehaviour and Delinquency in Early Adolescence* is a pattern of behaviour that is predictive of continued delinquency and drug abuse problems in later adolescence.
 - *Association with Children who are Using Drugs.* The powerful influence of peers during adolescence ensures that children with friends and close acquaintances who abuse alcohol or drugs will be at greater risk of becoming regular substance abusers.
 - *The Development of Favourable Attitudes Towards Drugs in Middle School Years.* As children begin to know other children who are using drugs in the later elementary school grades, the earlier negative attitudes to drug use tends to soften. This more favourable attitude towards drug use places them at higher risk of becoming substance abusers themselves.

- *Early First Use of Drugs.* The research evidence suggest that young people who initiate alcohol or drug use before the age of fifteen years are at twice the risk of having drug problems when compared with those who wait until after the age of nineteen (Robins & Przybeck, 1985).

2.2 FACTORS PREDICTIVE OF GENERALIZED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

What the consensus in the psychiatric literature suggests is that the following factors present during childhood increase the likelihood of an individual acquiring an entrenched set of attitudes and behaviour patterns which, taken together, crystallize in late adolescence and/or adulthood into a permanent personality profile that psychiatrists refer to as an *Anti-social Personality Disorder* (APD). These risk factors include the following:

- having Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder during childhood;
- exhibiting the characteristics of a Conduct Disorder during prepuberty;
- the absence of consistent parental discipline;
- abuse as a child;
- removal from the home; and
- growing up without parental figures of both sexes.

The degree of "entrenchment" of attitude and behaviour patterns can surely be questioned, as can the value and even validity of the concept "character-disturbed child" and "anti-social personality disorder." Psychiatrists and psychologists do have an unfortunate tendency to seek the same kind of signature patterns in human relations that physicians find in human neurology and physiology, often forgetting that human attitudes, values and behaviours are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through social interaction. Unlike the virus or bacteria, human beings have minds and behaviours that can change. Referring to a personality type as being "disordered" is not the same as saying that a person's body has a genetic, biomechanical or germ-based disorder. A psychological disorder is merely a useful analogy and to think otherwise is to set up those who are thus labelled for the utter neglect of a society which has written them off as permanently damaged goods. Yet the "shrinks" have a point, however simplistic and wrong-headed much of their love for reductionist categories may be: As any seasoned observer of youth will be aware, unless children with anti-self or anti-social attitudes and behaviour patterns are challenged at pivotal points in their early socialization, those attitudes and habits will harden into patterns that seem virtually impenetrable by well-meaning adults.

Empirically-referenced characteristics of the individual who psychiatrists classify as having an anti-social personality disorder include a pattern of irresponsible and antisocial behaviour since the age of 15, as indicated by at least four of the following:

1. an inability to sustain consistent work behaviour;
2. a failure to conform to legal norms;
3. irritability and aggressiveness, often leading to assaultive behaviour, including family violence;
4. repeated failure to honour financial obligations;
5. a failure to plan ahead;
6. no regard for the truth, and frequent lying and "conning";
7. reckless regarding his or other's personal safety;
8. inadequacy and irresponsibility as guardian, placing the child at risk;
9. failure to consistently sustain a monogamous relationship;
10. a lack of remorse after an act of antisocial behaviour, such as hurting someone, and even feels justified in such actions.

2.3 FACTORS PREDICTIVE OF ADOLESCENT SUICIDE

While adolescent suicide is the ultimate self-destructive act, most experts believe that prevention efforts are particularly salient because as many as ninety percent of the adolescents who do commit suicide themselves give prior clues to their grim intentions. Efforts therefore have focussed on identifying these clues and using them as a basis for intervention.

While research on the causes of adolescent suicide in Canada is relatively limited, a review of the North American literature generally provides a basis for developing a profile of the risk factors associated with suicide and suicidal attempts. These risk factors, which provide our "clues" to suicidal intentions, have been profiled in a recent counselling manual, prepared by Capuzzi (1989), that is devoted to youthful suicide intervention; they include the following:

Behavioural Indicators

- *Lack of Concern about Personal Welfare.* A suicidal adolescent will often display an uncharacteristic recklessness in the management of his or her personal behaviour, seeming to take unnecessary risks.
- *Changes in Social Behaviour.* There is also a tendency for adolescents to display uncharacteristic behaviour when they become preoccupied with suicidal thoughts. An outgoing individual might start to withdraw from social interaction. A co-operative, positive teenager may suddenly seem rebellious, nonconforming and generally negative about life. A "neat freak" might suddenly start being slovenly.
- *Decline in School Achievement.* A rapid disengagement from academic involvement in school may be a strong indicator of suicidal tendencies, especially for children whose academic performance or, at least, participation, has been either consistent or very

successful.

- *Marked Difficulties with Concentration and Clear Thinking.* When contemplating suicide, an adolescent may become so anguished that he or she cannot concentrate on any task, activity or conversation. It may become more and more obvious that the adolescent's attention span is shorter and that his/her conversation varies from the agreed upon topic. Reasoning and thinking patterns may become confused.
- *Altered Plans of Sleeping and Eating.* As the adolescent becomes more preoccupied with thoughts of suicide, sleeping and/or eating patterns may alter drastically. These changes may vary from not being able to sleep all the way to wanting to stay in one's own bedroom and sleep all the time.
- *Attempts to Put Personal Affairs in Order.* Similar to adults contemplating suicide, adolescents will often make preparations to "put their house in order." Attempts are often made to "smooth over" troubled relationships, reinstate old relationships, finish projects, or give away prized possessions.
- *Drug or Alcohol Abuse.* Many emotionally troubled youth use and abuse alcohol in an attempt to assuage their feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, and to gain the self-confidence to take charge of their lives. Unfortunately, excessive substance use leads to more confused thinking patterns, greater difficulties with problem-solving, and greater social conflict rather than aiding in the problem-solving process.
- *An Intense Interest in How Others are Feeling.* Sometimes adolescents who are becoming suicidal become preoccupied with how others are feeling. This can become an intense, all-consuming pastime and it can serve to lessen preoccupation with one's self as well as to stimulate an interest on the part of other people in exploring the suicidal adolescent's own feelings.
- *Preoccupation with Themes of Death and Violence.* Adolescents contemplating suicide often become focussed on thoughts of death and violence. They may talk about what death might be like, plan their own funerals, or develop a morbid interest in movies, stories, comics, and even gossip in which death and suicide are central elements.
- *Sudden Improvement after a Period of Depression.* Sometimes adolescents who have been in a deep bout of depression appear to escape the depression with surprising speed, their sleeping, eating and interpersonal behaviour returning to normal. Relieved parents, relatives or friends are elated; hoping for the best, they are also easily fooled. Sudden and drastic "turnarounds" may be signals that the adolescent may be peaking in his/her suicidal crisis and a self-destructive act is imminent. Some researchers believe that this sudden termination of a bout of depression is in fact the relief that follows a final decision to actually carry out the suicide act.
- *Sudden or Increased Promiscuity.* Some research suggests that sudden or increased pursuit of sexual relations without due consideration for precautions is also sometimes a signal that suicide thoughts may be escalating.

- *Verbal Cues.* Adolescents at risk of suicide often provide verbal cues to their imminent attempts at ending their lives, making such statements as "You'll be sorry about how you treated me," "I wish I were dead," "If such and such happens, I'm going to be history," or "The only way out is to die." Such verbal cues are often given at unexpected times and they are often quite direct.

Motivations and Cognitive Distortions

Underlying motivations and cognitive distortions also tend to distinguish a suicidal adolescent from a non-suicidal one. Capuzzi observes that self-disclosure should be encouraged by counsellors when dealing with adolescents exhibiting suicidal indicators (1989). The same writer suggests that suicidal motivation can best be understood if it is viewed as following one of the following primary functions:

1. an avoidance function, used to protect the individual from continued pain;
2. a control function through which the adolescent attempts to regain control of either his/her self or her/his circumstances;
3. a signalling (or communicative) function which broadcasts to others that there is a need for either help, reduced situational stress, or both.

Capuzzi also suggests that suicidal adolescents tend to distort their thinking, in particular they tend to engage in *all-or-nothing thought patterns* (See, in particular, the work of Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck and David Burns [a useful summary is provided by Werner, 1982]), which divides the options into two polarities: either a specific, dramatic — and often unrealistic — improvement in circumstances at one pole, or self-destruction, and negative self-talk, which reinforces the suicidal option, as the other polar type of reaction.

In addition to these thought distortions, certain themes appear to emerge in self-disclosures; these include the following:

- a desire to escape from a situation that seems intolerable, such as difficulty in school, physical abuse, drugs, or lack of friends;
- wanting to secure the attention of others;
- wanting to rejoin a deceased family member or friend;
- a directly or indirectly expressed desire to manipulate others;
- a preoccupation with being punished or avoiding being punished;
- wanting to control the time and context in which death will occur;
- wanting to get over a seemingly unresolvable conflict;
- wanting to be martyred for a cause;
- a desire for revenge, for wanting to punish the survivors.

Personality Characteristics

While there is no consensus warranted on the basis of the research into the "personality profile" of the suicidal adolescent, investigators have agreed on a number of characteristics which seem to be common to many; these include:

- *Low Self-Esteem.* A number of researchers have linked suicide probability to low self-esteem (Cull & Gill, 1982; Faigel, 1966; Freese, 1979; Stein & Davis, 1982; Stillion, McDowell & Shamblin, 1984).
- *Hopelessness & Helplessness.* Several studies have linked the probability of adolescent suicide to the experience that one's own feelings are typically negative and a persistent belief that circumstances tend to be in some way negative, and neither can be controlled (See Cull & Gill, 1982; Kovacs, Beck and Weissman, 1975; Jacobs, 1971; Peck, 1983).
- *Isolation.* Many suicidal adolescents prefer to be alone or to develop small or limited social networks rather than attempting to develop a large number of friends (See Hafen, 1972; Peck, 1983; Sommes, 1984).
- *Stress and Low Frustration Tolerance.* Suicidal adolescents seem to experience intense stress and to exhibit a relative intolerance regarding its management. At least two studies have linked this difficulty to low frustration tolerance (Cantor, 1976; Kiev, 1977).

The above traits are those which have secured most support in the relevant research. Still other traits mentioned by counsellors include an *intense achievement orientation*, reflecting an attempt to compensate for feelings of low self-worth. For such individuals, a dramatic school, athletic or social loss may be experienced so profoundly that it can be a trigger for suicide.

Another trait often mentioned by counsellors is *guilt* based upon the belief, real or perceived, that they are forever disappointing parents or significant others because they do not "measure up" to expectations.

A final trait that counsellors often mention is *other-directedness*, a sociological concept which implies that, rather than depending on one's inner capacity for self-evaluation, their views and decisions are based upon the opinions and social influences of others. Obviously, this trait tends to encourage guilt when those to whom one most looks for approval seem impossible to satisfy.

Depression

While not all suicidal adolescents suffer from depression, researchers believe that from 60 percent to 90 percent do. It is probably fair comment to observe that, given the complexities of adolescence and the special strain of growing up with the insecurities of the economy, it

is normal for adolescents to experience short bouts of depression. However, as Hafen and Frandsen (1986) have observed, adolescent depression is often not so readily identified as it is in adults. While the depressed adult is typically visibly sad, often tearful, despondent and expressing a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness, an adolescent may react to depression by skipping classes at school, running away or acting out in other forms of rebellion.

2.4 UNPROTECTED SEXUAL ACTIVITY

There has been a relatively large body of research documenting the social risks of teen pregnancies for mothers and children (Card, 1981; Moore and Burt, 1982). Most of this work has documented a long list of negative consequences, including truncated educations for the mother, lower paying jobs, greater unemployment, greater likelihood of marital disruption or out-of-wedlock childbearing, children who are slower to develop and who do less well academically and socially in school when they begin their education.

While the relevant research suggests that the quality of life for lone parents with professional or managerial occupations and their children may be equivalent to that of two-parent families in which one or both parents work outside the home, even amongst this most privileged group, routine living presents a far greater challenge for the lone parent. Extreme poverty is far more frequently found amongst female lone parents than among male lone parents and, outside of the professional and managerial classes, the probability of extreme poverty is very high for female lone parents.

In combination, being female, being young and being poor, and heading a family alone, intercorrelates statistically with a number of life situation variables to produce a lengthy list of significantly heightened social and health status risk levels for both parents and children. In their study of births given by unmarried adolescents in Ontario, Orton and Rosenblatt (1981: 13-14) have summarized some of the social problems associated with adolescent pregnancy:

- Frequently, children raised by adolescent mothers are shortchanged in their emotional and social development.
- Pregnancy and parenthood are a major barrier to young people, especially women, seeking to complete their education and develop work skills as a basis for self-support.
- Orton and Rosenblatt argue that adolescent pregnancy in the industrial (or "post-industrial") society of today virtually breeds poverty and women and children tend to bear the brunt of the negative consequences of adolescent pregnancy. Increasingly, males are becoming disconnected from responsibility for birth control and for the parenting of children conceived accidentally. These facts have significant personal implications for mothers and children and cost implications for society as a whole.

Effects of Youthful Lone Parenthood on Mothers

Various studies comparing adolescent single mothers who decide to keep their babies rather than granting their adoption have found that,

- The "keepers" are more likely to leave their parental home shortly after the birth and to form their own household; and
- they are also more likely to lose the regular supportive contact with parents and families of orientation.
- Finally, the "keepers" are less likely to continue on in school after the birth, thus reducing their long-term employment prospects.

While qualitative studies describing the point of view of young lone parenthood for adolescents are rare in the literature, a study by Macdonnell (1981) in Nova Scotia offers some insights. The study compared a sample of 353 single adolescent mothers with 332 married mothers. The majority of the non-married mothers had neither planned or wanted their pregnancies; a highly disproportionate number came from non-intact families; and very few of the unmarried mothers had completed high school or had completed any vocational training.

Much of the interview with the mothers concerned problems they experienced that were related to their parenting; these included:

- "Getting enough money to meet expenses" was by far the most common problem, and it was a concern for over half of the unmarried mothers.
- About one-quarter of the mothers said that "arguments" with others regarding child-rearing practice constituted a major problem for them.
- "Finding work" was the next most important self-identified problem amongst the unmarried mothers.
- "Loneliness" was next in order.
- "Finding babysitters" was next.
- "Inadequate housing" followed babysitting.

Effects on Children

The children of families headed by young lone parents also tend to experience more physical, emotional and social-developmental problems than other children. The Nova Scotia study referred to above (Macdonell, 1981) indicated that the children of adolescent unmarried mothers in their sample were far more frequently hospitalized for illnesses and accidents than the children of married, two-parent families.

A limited size, convenience sample (based on referrals) study by Ambert (1985) compared

the effects of socio-economic status differences and gender on children's behaviour. The study compared children from families with low socio-economic status (SES) headed by females with high SES lone-parent families and male-headed lone parent families. Compared with the other groups, children from low-income, female-headed lone parent families tended to frequently be truant from school, to be disrespectful towards teachers, to be prematurely involved sexually, in conflict with the law, frequently absent from the home overnight and failing in school.

The Ambert study also suggest that the children's social dysfunctionality outside the home followed from a pattern of negative attitudes and behaviour directed at their parents who were young, lone-parent mothers in low SES families. The study found frequent disobedience from children in these families to be common, even in pre-schoolers. The children often refused to comply with parental instructions, yelled at their mothers, tended to mess up the house, and have temper tantrums.

Costs to Community and Society

The profile that emerges of the most at-risk families headed by lone parents is one in which

- adolescent mothers have unplanned pregnancies prior to graduating from high school;
- the mothers discontinue their high school studies;
- they mothers establish an autonomous residence;
- the mothers are supported financially by social assistance payments;
- they lack the normative parenting skill training and knowledge transfer associated with mother/daughter relationships because they are isolated from their mothers or their mothers themselves lack the interest, knowledge or skills to transfer adequate parenting skills;
- their children are at high risk of being either neglected or abused, and
- their children react negatively to their mothers in the form of disobedience, hostility, and disrespect, forming anti-social behaviour patterns at an early stage within their own homes;
- these anti-social behaviour patterns are carried outside of the home and into the school, where a formal labelling process begins—a process which comes to define the child as a deviant posing disciplinary problems for school authorities;
- the children of these highly at-risk families tend to fail in school in disproportionate numbers, these children also tend to come in conflict with the law and experience incarceration; and
- they tend to produce lone-parent families headed initially by adolescent females with inadequate parenting skills and insufficient employment skills to support the family.

As the obvious pattern implicit to this list makes clear, by not intervening to support these young single parents in coping with the challenges, frustrations and loneliness of managing a home and raising children in poverty, society is committing what some social policy analysts call "community neglect." By neglecting the needs of these young mothers and their children, society will also incur an enormous, continuing, intergenerational economic and social burden.

Why Adolescents Practice Unprotected Sex and Assume Parenthood Roles so Early

If being a teen and becoming pregnant and taking on parenthood is such an onerous undertaking, then why do adolescents engage in unsafe sex and, upon becoming pregnant, bring the child to term and become mothers?

There is a cumulative and convergent understanding amongst social scientists regarding a set of identifiable demographic and social factors associated with teen pregnancy (Miller & Moore, 1990). These factors include:

- *Biological Development.* The evidence indicating a positive relationship between sexual activity and biological development is clear from studies of the relationship between age, biological maturity, and hormone levels on the one hand, and the incidence of sexual activity on the other (Udry, Billy, Morris, Groff, & Raj, 1985)
- *Gender Differences.* Despite earlier female physical maturation, the sexual activity rates for boys exceed that of girls for all ages. Both differences in biology (testosterone levels) and differences in socialization and social norms probably account for these differences in behaviour between the sexes (See Card, Peterson and Greeno, 1992, for a review)
- *Social and Cultural Factors* also play a role, with large differences in early sexual activity exhibited across social class and ethnic groups (Card, Peterson and Greeno, 1992)
- *Family Influences.* The beliefs of parents regarding what is appropriate and what is not appropriate regarding teen sexual relations tend to be influential when parents and children typically pattern an open communication style (Moore, Peterson, & Furstenberg, 1986). The modelling of parents is also of influence; for example, teens living with single mothers who are dating are more likely to be active than teens with single parents who are not dating (Moore, Peterson and Furstenberg, 1986).
- *Peer Influences.* Peers are also very influential. Some research suggests that, while friends won't report their own sexual activity, their shared perceptions of the sexual behaviour of their friends are highly predictive of their own behaviour (Newcomer, Gilbert, & Udry, 1980). Schools and communities with homogenous ethnic members and socio-economic advantages and in which early sexual activity is normative tend to have elevated teen pregnancy rates, whereas research has shown that heterogenous communities and schools in which groups with varying norms regarding age of initial sexual activity tend to prolong the average age of first sexual liaisons (Furstenberg,

Morgan, Moore, & Peterson, 1987).

- *Personal Traits.* Personal characteristics also influence adolescent sexual activity. Adolescents who have high educational or career aspirations, who have greater confidence in their own abilities to affect their environment, and who have a lower propensity to take risks are less likely to become sexually active. Even personal skills come into play. More assertive teens and high achievers in school are less likely to become sexually active (Card, Peterson, & Greeno, 1992).
- *Contraceptive Use.* Obviously, contraceptive use influences the likelihood of avoiding unplanned, teen pregnancies. Contraceptive use is influenced by the same personal and social factors described above but it is also influenced by the adolescent's knowledge of contraception, the availability of contraceptive devices, attitudes and beliefs about contraception, and the effectiveness of adolescent contraceptive practices (Card, Peterson, & Greeno, 1992).

2.5 SOCIAL RISK LEVELS AMONG ABORIGINAL YOUTH

Aboriginal youth tend to be at substantially higher risk than non-aboriginal youth of experiencing the negative impact of health problems and social problems, whether the measurement of risk is based on exposure to risk factors or actual prevalence data. In this chapter, we shall consider how aboriginal youth, as a population segment, experience the specific risk factors that present great challenges to Canada's general adolescent population. Subsequently, we shall attempt to explain the extremely high risk levels associated with aboriginal socio-cultural status.

As we have observed in general terms in Chapter 1, to experience adolescence in Canada as an aboriginal youth is to experience significantly greater than average risks of becoming an abuser of alcohol and drugs, including solvents. The probability of an aboriginal youth dropping out of school, of facing a lifetime of unemployment or underemployment is also far greater than the same probability estimates for non-aboriginal youth. The probability of participating in frequent acts of interpersonal violence and property crimes is also far greater than average. In addition to these anti-social behaviour patterns, aboriginal adolescents are also at much higher risk of engaging in *self*-destructive behaviour patterns. These behaviours include suicide, the ultimate act of self-destruction, as well as self-scarring and patterns of reckless actions which pay little heed to personal safety. Sniffing glue, gas and other volatile substances must be included in this latter category because they are potentially so lethal.

2.5.1 DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

There are probably no cultural groups within the Canadian population with lower levels of functional literacy than the aboriginal population. Illustrative was a 1987 study by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, which indicated that an estimated 83.1% of the Saskatchewan Indian and Metis population completing Grade 8 did not

complete Grade 12. Further, a full 93.7% of Saskatchewan Indian and Metis students completing Grade 6 do not complete Grade 12. The same research suggested that the overall high school dropout rate for aboriginal youth was as high as 90% in Saskatchewan in the late 1980s. The situation appears to have been gradually improving in recent years in Native communities throughout Canada, which is at least partially owing to Indian teacher education programs and the advent of locally controlled aboriginal schools. However, leaving school prior to high school matriculation is by far the most common experience for Native youth. That fact stands out starkly in an economic world in which any serious attempt to join the work force on a permanent basis is confronted with increasingly elevated demands. In the mid-1980s in Saskatchewan, a registered Indian male between the ages 18 and 24 years old was more likely to experience a stint in jail than to complete his or her high school education.

2.5.2 SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DELINQUENCY

Of all North American populations, none appears to be at higher risk of psychoactive substance abuse than aboriginal youth. Part of this risk is related to the widespread nature of the problem in the communities in which they live.

In 1986, the U.S. Indian Health Service called substance abuse the number one health problem among American Indians. Former head of the Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Directors Association in Canada, Clive Linklater, repeatedly asks the question at meetings he addresses: *How many of us in this room have not been directly affected by a tragedy experienced by someone close to us in which alcohol problems are involved?* When he asks First Nations people in the audience to raise their hands if they can answer affirmatively, rarely is a single hand raised.

Close observers of the realities of aboriginal youth in Canada agree that most of the environmental and personal risk factors identified above for children at risk of substance abuse and delinquency are, respectively, characteristic of First Nations' reserves and urban, inner-city residential areas and commonplace rather than infrequent amongst First Nations' youth. Consider the following:

- Research has shown that 50-80% of Native American youth have engaged in the abuse of alcohol before 18 years of age, 30-50% have used marijuana (Lambert, 1988; Weibel-Orlando, 1984; Beauvais, Oetting, and Edwards, 1985), and between 17% to 22% have used inhalants—a figure which compares to approximately 11% for non-aboriginals (May, 1986:188). At least one study suggests that use levels for Native Americans are at least 25% higher than for non-aboriginals and heavy alcohol use was reported at 2.2% of the Native American population compared with 0.2% for the non-aboriginal population (Moore, 1988). While these are admittedly American rather than Canadian data, multiple community health studies conducted by the author of Vision Seekers confirm that similar findings hold for the Canadian Indian population.
- Community health studies in Canada also suggest that there is an increasing trend for aboriginal youth to abuse alcohol and/or other drugs *before* the age of 18 years—and

research also shows that, unlike the non-native population, there is less difference in the alcohol use patterns of First Nations' boys and girls compared with non-aboriginal boys and girls.

- Community health studies utilizing survey research instruments also indicate that a majority of long term chronic substance abusers in Indian communities began to use alcohol between 13 and 16 years of age.

2.5.3 ANTI-SOCIAL ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS

It is all too common for aboriginal youth to be overwhelmed by situational factors which, predictably, give rise to the abnormally high levels of social risk. These conditions tend to nourish a psychological mindset and cluster of behavioural traits that psychiatrists have described as *Conduct Disorder* and which some refer to as an *Anti-Social Personality Disorder*.

The pitfalls of labelling children as delinquents are many, including the fact that the application of labels may itself encourage children and youth to live up to the delinquent label. So avoiding the labelling process as much as possible is good policy advice. However, from a professional diagnostician's perspective, it must also be admitted that the attitude and behaviour patterns described as "disorders" by psychiatrists or clinical psychologists do have certain undeniable advantages. It is this writer's observation that these classifications of disturbed personalities often do accurately capture the characteristics uniformly exhibited by individuals with certain types of thought and behaviour patterns. It must also be admitted that, if certain attitudes and behaviour patterns are internalized during childhood or adolescence, they often become integrated into personalities and are thus very difficult to alter.

A substantial number of studies have accumulated to support the view that there are in fact a disproportionate number of aboriginal adolescents who clearly exhibit anti-social behaviours and attitudes. One such study, entitled the *Task Force on the Criminal Justice System and Its Impact on the Indian and Metis Population of Alberta* was reported in 1991. The study's data indicated that the incarceration rate for "Native" (Indian and Metis) adolescents convicted of crimes between the ages 12 and 18 years was approximately 600 percent higher than the same rate for non-Natives (Government of Alberta, *Justice on Trial*, 1991).

Further, as various studies have confirmed, Status Indian children in the 1-14 age group are at significantly higher risk than non-Indian children of suffering from child abuse. Child abuse is a primary risk factor for the acquisition of the entrenched anti-social attitudes and behaviour patterns that psychiatrists refer to as the *Antisocial Personality Disorder*.

2.5.4 RISKS TO COMMUNITIES POSED BY THE GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF ANTI-SOCIAL FIRST NATIONS' CHILDREN

By its very nature, anti-social behaviour patterns impact negatively on families and communities. Left unchecked, the growth in number of troubled adolescents creates risks to the health and safety of entire communities, whether in reserve settings, rural areas or cities.

In recent years, the city of Winnipeg and other prairie cities have seen the rise of urban gangs which actively recruit their membership from troubled, at-risk Native youth. Off the record, many police officials indicate that, to their knowledge, initiation rights in some of these gangs have included acts of criminality, including auto theft, burglary, assault and sexual assault. Such gangs are now implicated significantly in the informal social organization of Manitoba correctional institutions. Some reports in the popular press indicate that the presence of gang activity in Band governance is expanding significantly. For many Native leaders, this element of coercion adds a new and very ominous dimension to the already very stressing job of administering the affairs of communities in which less than ten percent of the adult population is actively employed and earning an income.

Increasingly, groups of aboriginal children with antisocial behaviour patterns are posing an ongoing threat to the public safety and personal and public property of those who live in their own communities and in surrounding towns. In recent years, the municipal and county councils of communities near reserves have increasingly attempted to develop community strategies for battling the problem of youthful vandalism, car theft and break-ins. Typically, the target of the strategies are unsupervised teenagers and pre-adolescents "hanging out" at the hub of reserves and on the streets of nearby towns with few recreational resources to offer. Elderly people often live anxiously in considerable fear of these youth.

Clearly, addressing the anti-social behaviour patterns of aboriginal youth is a concern of *both* First Nation and non-aboriginal communities and their leaders; it is *not* an "us" vs. "them" issue in which each party has all their interests located on the opposite side of the fence from the other. For the leaders of either aboriginal or non-aboriginal communities to ignore the need for secondary intervention programming is to invite problems of alarming proportions.

2.5.5 SUICIDE, EXTREME CARELESSNESS AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Youthful aboriginals and young aboriginal adults are also at relatively high risk of death from self-inflicted wounds and careless behaviours. Their death rates are generally far higher than the average for non-aboriginals in the same age cohorts. Status Indian death rates for 15-19 year olds are more than 3 times as high as their Canadian age group counterparts, more than 4 times as high for 20-24 year olds, and approximately 4 times as high for those falling into the 25-29 year and 30-34 year old age cohorts. These rates at least in part reflect the higher levels of lifestyle-related, communicable disease, inadequate diets, and high rates of injuries, both accidental and consciously inflicted by self or others.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) reported that, in 1992, fatal injuries were the leading cause of death among registered Indian males and the second most frequent cause of death among registered Indian females in those regions in which Health Canada collects data. The "injury" category as a cause of death includes all forms of accidental death (unintentional injury) and homicide and suicide (intentional injury). For young people aged 15 to 24, fully 85.5 percent of all deaths were attributable to this broad category.

The adolescent Native suicide rate in Canada has consistently been much higher than it is for the general adolescent population, and there have even been several group suicide incidents which have served to alert Canadians generally to the plight of Native youth in highly dysfunctional, remote communities, in which pressures resulting from dramatic social change exerted on the local social structure and traditional culture are especially intense.

2.6 SUMMARY

The probability of engaging in behaviours that have devastating long-term consequences is disproportionately high for adolescents of low socio-economic status in general and aboriginal adolescents in particular. In the absence of specialized interventions, the quality of life, health and educational and work opportunities of those at the highest social risk will be unacceptably impoverished. These same behaviours will result in enormous social costs, as measured in the pain they themselves experience and the pain of their peers, families or unfamiliar victims. If there are a significant number of such troubled youth, the social costs can and often do include a fundamental deterioration of the quality of community life in general.



3.0 EXPLAINING DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH SOCIAL RISK LEVELS AMONG ABORIGINAL ADOLESCENTS

To understand why any child or young adolescent in Canada is at high risk of becoming addicted to alcohol or drugs or of developing anti-self or anti-social behaviour patterns, it is necessary to explore her biography and its intersection with her personality, family reality and general social circumstances. To understand why First Nations' adolescents are far more likely than non-aboriginal children to develop these behavioural characteristics, one must examine how the biographies of aboriginal children intersect with the history of aboriginal cultures within a Europeanized North America and, more specifically, Canadian society.

This extensive, explanatory chapter may well be viewed as unnecessary by some readers. It is included to help program Coordinators in their attempt to place in context and thereby better understand the historical and social conditions that give rise to the concentration of risk factors confronting aboriginal youth. It should not only help Coordinators in their general understanding of the need for Vision Seekers but it should serve as a resource for program development and as a way of focussing various elements of the program.

3.1 NORTH AMERICA'S (AB)ORIGINAL CULTURES

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans on this continent, thousands of autonomous aboriginal bands, tribes or "nations" lived in what was later to become Canada. Within this diversity, linguists have identified eleven different language families (i.e., groups of related but separate languages). In descending order according to the numbers of current users, those languages can be listed as follows: (1) Algonquian (2) Athapaskan (3) Inuit-Aleut (4) Haida (5) Tlingit (6) Siouan (7) Tsimshian (8) Wakashan (9) Salishan (10) Kutenai and (11) Iroquoian.

When attempting to describe the thousands of North American indigenous peoples according to their cultural similarities, anthropologists developed the idea of "cultural areas," which used geographical boundaries to encompass broadly similar groupings. In Canada, seven such areas were identified (Driver, 1988): (1) the Arctic (2) Western Subarctic (3) Eastern Subarctic (4) Northeastern Woodlands (5) Plains (6) Plateau; and (7) Northwest Coast.

Anthropologists often categorize cultures according to their mode of adaptation to the environment or, more specifically, to the manner in which they exploit available resources. In much of Canada, prior to European contact, aboriginal peoples primarily lived by hunting small and large game and by gathering plant foods, berries and lichens, and by fishing in known locales. For the Cree, the Ojibwa, the Chipewyan, the primary social unit was the "band." The band consisted of small groups, typically ranging from approximately fifty to one hundred people, which grew into larger formations (i.e., a "tribe" or "regional band") when resources were plentiful, and broke down into even smaller nuclear and extended family formations when resources were scarce. It is therefore important to note that each extended family formation once had the strength to function autonomously and had to contain within the family unit all the essential skills to exist.

Outside of the Plains area, more bountiful plant, animal and fishing stocks allowed for the settlement of greater aggregates of people and hence nourished a greater degree of cultural complexity. Even on the Plains, the introduction of the horse made it possible for the Plains Cree, the Assiniboines, and the Blackfoot Confederacy to develop a reliance on the bison and, while they also were organized primarily as bands, during the hunt their encampments could grow to several hundreds.

The peoples of the Eastern Woodlands, by contrast, developed as horticulturalists, producing a variety of crops, such as corn, beans and squash, and they established permanent villages and complex, democratic political structures. Included amongst the horticulturalists were the Iroquois Confederacy and the Huron. The villages of the Huron and the five Iroquois nations, the Mohawk, the Cayuga, the Oneida, the Seneca and the Onondaga, were permanent and relatively large, numbering from several hundred to just under one thousand.

The aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Coast, such as the Haida, Tlingit, Kwakiutl, and Gitskan, were resident in permanent villages along the coastal areas or inland along the rivers. They survived primarily by fishing and hunting sea animals. They also gathered plants for food and herbal plants for medicinal purposes. The coastal peoples developed complex social systems and extremely sophisticated totemic artworks, for which they are now known throughout the world.

In contrast to these aboriginal groups, the Metis are a post-contact formation, with roots primarily in the cultures of the northern aboriginal populations (Cree, Ojibwa, and Chipewyan) and European cultures (especially French and Scottish). Their distinctive culture was a product of the fur trade itself and the intermarriage of fur traders and aboriginal women. Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries these marriages resulted in the blending of European and North American customs, technologies and languages into a distinctive culture centred on the fur trade. The Metis language mixture of French and Cree is called *Michif*.

While Europeans borrowed heavily on the knowledge of the indigenous cultures in North America in order to explore and exploit the resources and later occupy the lands of their newly discovered continent, they also found it convenient to dismiss the host cultures as eccentric and quaint at best but "primitive," "savage," and "pagan" at worst—cultures to be eradicated and replaced with the "superior" culture imported and necessarily imposed by the Europeans as a "civilizing" campaign. Assimilation was the fundamental aim of the expansionist Europeans. Thus ethnocentrism served as a convenience for British and European political leaders and traders as they set about to exploit the resources of North America. This belief in European superiority served the same purpose for leaders with expansionist designs wherever and whenever national powers intruded upon the lands occupied by peoples with vastly different cultures than their own. The view that the more "advanced" society would "civilize" the "primitives" by sharing their religion, morality, education, customs and technologies suggested that a fair and justifiable exchange was being made for the occupancy, use and exploitation of the lands previously occupied only by aboriginal peoples.

The argument regarding which peoples gained most from the European expansion into the Americas will go on for many years hence. There are some stark facts that dull the vitality of this debate, however.

Consider the fact that literally millions of indigenous people may have died as a result of the epidemic diseases imported with the European traders, explorers and settlers.

Consider also the fact that, relative to the European and other newcomers who have prospered enormously, First Nations' peoples have persistently lived in relative poverty and, until recently, even squalor. At the socio-economic margins of the countries of Canada and the United States, the two modern nations which have generally experienced more prosperity than any societies in the history of humankind, indigenous North American peoples have only recently begun to escape the Third World conditions that came to characterize their reality after the establishment of national state systems. That escape is in fact very recent, and the scars on First Nations and their individual members remain visible today; they are seen in the unemployment statistics, substance abuse patterns, illness, injury and suicide data and conviction and incarceration statistics. While some of these scars are only now beginning to heal, others are only now being identified, as adult survivors of early trauma experienced through neglect and abuse in dysfunctional families and in mission run residential schools begin to speak out about their early victimization.

Increasingly, non-aboriginal peoples are themselves being exposed for the first time to the consequences of a tragic First Nations' history. Federal and Provincial Governments now deal almost daily with angry and determined Native negotiators seeking justice. Increasing numbers of non-aboriginal, front line public service workers, merchants and inner city residents are now in daily contact through work or residency with the personal tragedies of an uprooted and marginalized Native population expressing the extremities of depression, alcoholic retreat and, on occasion, the emotional explosions triggered by anger and rage. In short, the excesses of European and Euro-Canadian, expansionist history are now being paid for in escalating social costs. The insensitivities and mistakes of the settlement process have created social and health problems which quickly and increasingly translate into growing public expenditures on welfare, health care, and the administration of justice.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 1991 Census there were just over 800,000 people in Canada claiming aboriginal origins, with 620,000 individuals who are identified as Status Indians, another 57,000 Inuit and the balance being made up of Metis or Non-Status Indians. That figure has increased dramatically over the present century. The recent growth in the aboriginal population in Canada is actually a resurgence from the population decline that accompanied the exposure of indigenous peoples in North America to European communicable diseases.

There is considerable debate among experts regarding the size of the indigenous population at the point of first sustained contact with Europeans. In the area that was to become Canada, an early scholarly estimate suggested a population of 220,000 indigenous people

inhabited the region at the time. The estimate has been criticized because it makes reference to a population figure *guesstimated* on reports derived from observations of the population well after it had been exposed to and suffered from the effects of fatalities associated with imported diseases. Using other methodologies, some estimates have ranged as high as 2 million people as an estimate of pre-contact population size, although these higher figures have also been widely criticised by rigorous scholarship. The figure of 500,000 for the indigenous population in Canada at the time of contact with Europeans is now the most widely accepted by scholars.

While the scientific debate regarding the pre-contact indigenous population size is a continuing one, unlikely to be resolved for many years hence, there is virtually no disagreement among experts with the view that the "Indian" peoples were, at various time during the post-contact period decimated by European diseases. Eventually, it was also devastated by the ill-health and starvation caused by the decline of the fur trade and the bison stocks that it had become dependent on and the depletion of food associated with the exhaustion of wild game animals that came with the growth of a settler population with guns and steel traps. Whether or not the "White" population actually intended to do harm, their behaviour eventually had consequences that were by any fair account overwhelming and tragic for the original inhabitants of what is now Canada.

In numbers, almost three-quarters of the peoples of aboriginal ancestry are officially "Status" Indians, which means that they are legally registered on Canada's federal Indian registry as an Indian and they also have membership in a band. Approximately half of the population of Status Indians live on federal lands reserved for their use (and called "reserves" or, in some instances, "reservations" [a term which is the common terminology employed for similar geo-administrative jurisdictions in the United States]).

3.3 THE ABORIGINAL FAMILY, CHILD REARING AND SOCIAL CHANGE: A CASE OF DISRUPTED ADAPTATION

In virtually all known societies, some configuration of close biological relatives constitute an institution that functions as a *family*—a basic social unit that serves to ensure that a human group reproduces itself biologically, through procreation, and economically, socially and culturally, through socialization of the young, through social control (or norm maintenance) and through innovation or adaptation to changing environmental conditions, be they of a social or physical nature. As an extension of that family system, the community also plays a key role in raising children.

A society confronted with the need to adapt to radically altered environmental circumstances must rely heavily on the adaptive capacity of its individual family units. If internally directed adaptation by the traditional family system is somehow blocked or distorted during conditions of rapid social change, then it is predictable that a series of social problems will appear. In contemporary North America, evidence of these problems shows itself in aboriginal communities through statistical tallies of alcohol abuse, inadequate education and training

levels and the consequent unemployment and widespread accidents, injuries and interpersonal violence. When the family system is disturbed and its patterns of interaction between spouses and between different generations are volatile and when roles, authorities, responsibilities and values become ill-defined, then, predictably, the offspring of the children of these dysfunctional families will be at high social risk.

Consider the several ways that the adaptation of Native families to change has been sufficiently disruptive that large numbers of aboriginal children are placed at high social, psychological and physical health risks. First, let us briefly consider what family life and child rearing were probably like prior to the coming of the Europeans.

3.3.1 - LIFE BEFORE CONTACT WITH EUROPEAN CULTURES

As noted above, prior to contact with the Europeans, the First Nations of the Americas existed in various cultural formations and with varying degrees of political, administrative and technological complexity. The variety ranged from the most common hunting and gathering societies through fishing and horticultural societies to various types of agricultural societies, including some, such as the Mayan, which supported highly elaborate city states. The most complex city states of the Americas were, in many ways, more sophisticated technologically than the urban habitats of Europeans at the time of first contact between Europeans and indigenous North Americans.

Before European contact, the peoples indigenous to North America existed in societies with clearly articulated norms governing community life. Individuals had a straightforward sense of how and where they belonged socially and the rights and obligations that belonging entailed. Their communities were based on relatively autonomous and integrated economies, family structures and parenting norms, personal behaviour codes, and mental and physical health maintenance and healing systems. Each tribal group lived in relative isolation from other indigenous societies, although many were connected through trade, sometimes very indirectly, through extensive and elaborate trading networks that traversed thousands of miles north and south, east and west, across North and South American continents.

While each tribal group employed distinctive linguistic and cultural methods to educate their children, virtually all of them required that certain skills be mastered before a young person was accepted as having adult status within the tribe. These knowledge and skill requirements included not only economic skills but spiritual knowledge and sacred, ceremonial practices, a broad knowledge of their cultural heritage, including its traditional values and beliefs and its repository of lore and myths. It also included "warrior" or group security skills, which in most cultures were primarily assigned to the males. This knowledge and skill base, passed on through the generations, provided the basis for providing an effective means of educating, socializing and transmitting languages and culture. The child's special aptitudes, interests or temperament might shape his or her role in the community. However, each child was expected to be knowledgeable and competent in all of the three areas. Thus a child who was an exceptionally good hunter might spend more time hunting and supplying meat to the community, but the same child was also expected to know the tribe's ethics, values, and

religion, and he was expected to practice them accordingly.

The knowledge and competencies acquired by the indigenous North American child were part of an integrated pattern of community affairs. In the northern regions, storytelling during the cold winter months functioned to entertain adults and youth during the containment forced by the weather. Story telling was also one of the main techniques used for teaching children. Sustaining continuity with the past and carrying the practical techniques of survival forward through the generations was secured through role modelling, direct personal instruction carried on throughout the year, personal challenges and a rich oral tradition. Religious rituals were conducted to encourage successful hunts, abundant berry, herb and vegetable growth, or plentiful fish stock or harvests.

Historically, aboriginal North American cultures met the socialization, teaching and protective functions of children through a set of practices designed to ensure the culture's future. Despite the romanticized, mainstream view that indigenous North American societies did everything "naturally," including the skills of parental care of children, traditional parenting was actually based on a philosophy and set of values intended to preserve the integrity of the band, tribal, village or city state society.

Within an extended family and band network, child rearing was shared among several persons; it truly did take the whole community to raise a child. Under the loving and protective eye of an aunt or grandmother or other tribal Elders, children were safeguarded when their parents were away on a hunt or gathering expedition. While grandparents and the mother were assigned primary responsibility for child care in most indigenous cultures, nurture was divided among many members of the community. No single individual was overburdened with the care, discipline or feeding of a child.

The limited size of band and village units ensured that social control flowed directly from the opinions of community members. Social pressures were strong and were applied to potentially negligent or maltreating parents as well as children. Those who did not comply with community norms regarding appropriate child care were often "chastised or ridiculed into compliance" (Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, Module I, 1984:5). Children were protected from inadequate parenting by the very nature of traditional social arrangements. Child abuse was probably rare because there were very clear expectations of the parenting role. In many indigenous societies, children, especially the very young, were treated with special reverence. As one writer observes:

In many tribes, children were perceived as gifts from the Creator, having entered the world in perfect harmony. Since they were such recent gifts from the Creator, they embodied innate wisdom, and their opinions and thoughts were regarded as having special significance. Thus, the maltreatment of a child might result in the return of the child's spirit to the Creator. The cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs system provided a natural mechanism for protecting children (NICWI, 1984:6).

In some tribes the role of disciplinarian was specialized, assigned to a specific tribal member

who was designated as having special powers. This removed the burden of physical discipline from parents by placing it in the hands of an individual understood to have a type of wisdom greater than any member of the community or family.

In fact, there were many traditional helping systems that met the mental health needs of parents and children. For example, there were individuals who were recognized by the tribe as shamans, medicine persons or tribal Elders with special functions. Various problem-solving practices were conducted through group sessions, typically arranged in the form of a sitting circle which, in many cultures, held spiritual significance.

Child rearing and discipline were integrated with the spiritual beliefs of the tribe. Tribes had specific expectations of the behaviour of children and these were taught and rigidly adhered to within groups. There was probably very little tolerance for any defiance of the fundamental beliefs of the culture—and, further, the consequences of such deviance were clearly understood by the children.

Beliefs and expectations that were passed along through the generations in oral history, stories and myth-telling were reinforced through ritual celebrations.

When European explorers first came into contact with the indigenous societies of North America, they were exposed to and learned much from the cultural practices of the indigenes. Yet as Tafoya and Del Vecchio observe of most of the European explorers,

... most viewed indigenous ways of life as primitive, and only a few explorers were able to experience and understand the Native American ways of life as complete, elaborate, practical cultures that were intact and not in need of 'civilization' (1996:48).

3.3.2 FACTORS INTERRUPTING THE SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION OF THE ABORIGINAL FAMILY TO THE NEW SOCIETY

It is important for First Nations' people *and* non-Native people to remember that the problems of the present, including loss of traditional lands, unemployment, alcohol abuse, suicide, depression, anxiety, family violence, sexual abuse, post-traumatic stress, and many other mental health problems are both directly and indirectly the result of a tragic history. They are not the result of weak indigenous cultures or an innately inferior ancestry. That history includes the destruction of traditional means of economic survival, destruction of the nuclear and extended family system, the suppression of traditional beliefs and spiritual practices, and systematic efforts to eliminate traditional languages—in short, the destruction of aboriginal, ethnic identities.

Simultaneously, the dominant White settler society often formally and informally excluded indigenous people from the emergent agricultural, resource extraction and industrial economic sectors that were the motors of Canadian nation-building and economic development. For many years, aided by the pass system that regulated their movements, First Nations people were virtually stranded on their reserves, their movements regulated by Indian agents who

managed and often dictated all the major decisions that influenced their community affairs.

There is a consensus amongst Aboriginal Studies' scholars that several historical processes had a particularly significant role to play in blocking the successful adaptation of the Native family to the realities of the social change that pressed in upon it. All of these processes were the direct or indirect product of policies intended to assimilate aboriginal peoples to the norms of the new society of Canada, dominated as it was by Europeans. Each of these factors is discussed below.

1. The Impact of Famine and Disease

The aboriginal family was especially strained by disease and famine. Lacking immunity to viral and bacterial infections they had little or no experience with, aboriginal peoples were extremely vulnerable to communicable diseases, born of the urban, industrializing environment in Britain and Europe and transmitted by European visitors and settlers in North America. Smallpox became a mass killer: It is estimated that it resulted in the deaths of half to two-thirds of the aboriginal population after the last major epidemic of 1870.

The push to the west of European and Euro-Canadian settlers and the overkill of the bison and depletion of other wild game stock resulted in periods of famine that placed great strains on the health of parents and grandparents, sapping their energies and morale and thus significantly reducing their capacity to provide adequate child care. Some historians believe that it was the promise of food and medicine that provided the government officials who negotiated the treaties with their best bargaining tool.

The multi-generational consequences of these early difficulties are now virtually impossible to trace but the effects were surely significant, both in terms of emotional and learning deficiencies.

2. The Early Disruption of the Traditional Value Framework

European explorers and settlers held many beliefs and values that were foreign to Native North Americans, including their ideas about the family. Because Europeans became the dominant people on the North American continent, they were able to impose their values and beliefs onto the indigenous societies.

During the era of the fur trade, established in the 1700s, considerable aboriginal economic activity became linked to the European trading system, and the full-blown concept of private property was introduced. During the fur trade, the European and Metis fur traders would deal only with the male heads of families. Under this pressure, the aboriginal extended family gradually shrank to its core nuclear unit. As a consequence, women and the elderly began to lose their status within the family social system.

The decline of the fur trade further usurped the status of women in the communities of first peoples. During the most active period of the fur trade aboriginal people provided the labour

force. Aboriginal women were central to the economic order because they possessed skills that were essential to sustain the trade.

After the decline of the fur trade and the immigration of European settlers, people of the First Nations were no longer needed as a labour force and the Metis were no longer needed as middlemen—and only the land they lived on and the agricultural resources that could be farmed and harvested from it, the timber that could be cut, and the minerals taken from beneath that land, was wanted. The indigenous peoples had become redundant to the new economy that had arisen on the very lands that had so recently been their hunting grounds and homelands.

3. Destruction of the Male Economic Role

Much like European economies prior to the development of agriculture, most aboriginal cultures in what is now Canada were pre-historical (they did not use writing) and the most advanced materials they used were made of stone. Most non-Indians therefore tend to be unaware of the quality of Indian economies and the contributions they made to human development. A few historical facts can be marshalled to give a semblance of balance to the record. Consider the following:

- Indian peoples of the Northern Plains and forest lands had developed extremely effective food-gathering, shelter-craft and weather protection technologies to cope with extremely variant and, at times, severely harsh weather conditions. Without their advice, middle-European explorers could not -- and often did not -- survive.
- Early explorers could *not* have probed into the heart of Canada without the Indian dogsled, birchbark canoe, the Indian snowshoe, Indian guides, and Indian medicines. Friendly Indians helped to open Canada peacefully for many European immigrants, teaching them how to survive on nature's bounty in a land characterized by an extremely harsh climate but bountiful resource potential both on and beneath the land.
- Indians employed outdoor skills that were eventually learned by sportsmen around the world. Yet Indians killed animals, such as the buffalo, not for sport itself but for the things they needed to survive. The Animistic religions, which embraced the belief that a higher power existed in spirit form in all living and non-living things, demanded that they have a deep respect for the environment and all of its animate and inanimate constituents. Thus hunting was undertaken with a deep respect for animals and they found practical uses for almost all of the animal.
- If we consider all Indians on the continent, it is apparent that almost every basic food item in Canadian kitchens today was first grown by Indians in the Americas.
- As American writer Jack Weatherford has observed, at each step of the process of European and American (settler) industrialization, American indigenous technologies played an active and significant role (1988).

So what happened to the indigenous economies and societies of North America that were so productive and which gave Canada -- and the world -- so very, very much?

In terms of their capacity as groups or as communities to take full advantage of the benefits and opportunities of Canada's industrial culture, the various indigenous peoples of Canada are significantly disadvantaged. Theories regarding the *causes* of this aboriginal socio-economic underdevelopment are many and no single model has achieved a consensus amongst analysts whose studies are dedicated to aboriginal matters.

There are certain key factors that have contributed to this state of underdevelopment for the registered Indian population that are generally conceded.

Originally, the indigenous population of Canada adapted with remarkable speed to the "steel culture" and other technologies of the Europeans, and integrated successfully into the fur trade economy introduced in the 17th and 18th centuries in North America. However, once settlement, agriculture, mining and industrial production replaced fur as the primary trade items demanded by European commerce and the British lost interest in the costly business of maintaining their North American empire, Indians became an "economically redundant" population for the new Canadian economic elite in Upper and Lower Canada. Policies of the time ensured that indigenous populations were concentrated on reserve land allotments. Such land assemblies were generally too small to accommodate significant growth over time. As a consequence, today, there are more First Nations' people in Canada living off of reserves than on reserves. Despite the Canadian government's attempt to assimilate indigenous peoples, there was resistance from non-aboriginals to Native workers, opposition to the growth of reserve land holdings, and there was a lack of will on the part of key government officials. Without consulting the First Nations in the area, mineral resources in Western Canada were simply signed away in the early 1930s to the provincial governments under the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement.

Economically speaking, the peoples of the First Nations became a surplus and idle work force within the Canadian economy and, sociologically, a socially marginalized population, existing as groups well outside of the mainstream. The most tragic aspect of this process was the fact that the economic function of the typical Indian male was, for all intents and purposes, essentially eliminated. The cash economy created a cash income dependency on the part of First Nations men and then, as economic demands changed, most aboriginal male workers became redundant or ill-equipped for the full-time jobs that were available. The majority became either seasonal workers only and, over time, as menial employment dissipated in the face of labour-saving technologies, substantial numbers became long-term social assistance recipients, not even working long enough to collect unemployment insurance.

Lacking a proud and full economic role, by the second half of the twentieth century, the role of the unemployed, First Nation male in the family became virtually redundant. Gradually, very large numbers of First Nations' families have come to be comprised of young children, a young mother and grandparents with a father having little or nothing to do with the family. Often this situation exists for more than one generation, a situation which has also debunked the traditional role of the grandfather in the family. This role confusion may be at the heart

of a variety of family violence and sexual abuse issues.

4. The Whiskey Trade, 'Frontier Drinking Styles' and Problem Drinking

There is no evidence that alcohol was used for recreational or ritual purposes by the aboriginal peoples who lived in Canada prior to contact with Europeans. In the absence of a set of traditional values and norms to govern its use, the introduction of alcohol into the First Nations has had an extremely destructive impact. Excessive drinking was encouraged by whiskey traders motivated by cunning. It was taught through imitation by the young men who were temporary to the region, men whose real homes were in Britain, Europe or central Canada. It was taught by explorers, bush camp loggers or miners, almost all intending to be temporary residents, who introduced a boisterous form of drunken comportment that few of them would have conducted in their home locales, which they viewed as "civilization." Thus drunken, acting out behaviour became institutionalized as appropriate drinking comportment in indigenous communities—an act which has left an extremely troublesome legacy for the individuals, families and communities of Canada's first peoples.

5. Ethnocide: The Aboriginal Holocaust

It is possible to speak of an aboriginal holocaust in North America without even referring to the Indian wars in the United States or the epidemics and other communicable diseases which resulted in so many deaths. A conscious policy of ethnic assimilation was pursued actively by the Canadian Federal Government, ostensibly in honour of their Treaty obligations. The effect was to essentially destroy Indian languages and culture. Appropriately, we can call this *ethnocide*, meaning policies intent on exterminating Native cultures by assimilating them to European customs, religion and languages. The policy consisted of a church- and school-based educational system, the reserve system and the rules surrounding the people living on it, and the expectations that people would leave it to become part of the larger economy; it also consisted, at a later date, of a child welfare policy.

a. The Missionary System of Assimilation: The French and Anglo churches attempted to displace the traditional belief systems of First Nations. The underlying assumption was that the "Natives" would fit better into the newcomers' fur trading and later settlement and land development schemes if they shared the religion of the "White man" and gave up their "savage spiritual beliefs."

The missionaries taught ideas and values about the family that differed from those of the First Nations. The Church encouraged the use of corporal punishment by men to be used to discipline both children and women.

The fact that child rearing and family life was so closely tied to the spiritual belief systems, meant that much of the traditional family system and child rearing practices were also

profoundly damaged.

b. *The Reserve System:* Reserves were essentially established for the original populations, with little room for the natural growth of the reserve populations being built into the settlement terms. It now appears that the reserves were deliberately limited in size and productive economic potential in order to encourage the off-reserve migration into the rural labour pool and urban labour markets. There is abundant evidence that assimilation was the primary goal of Federal Indian policy.

While attempts to assist Indian peoples in the acquisition of agricultural skills and lands were briefly a key part of the Federal Government's assimilationist policy strategy, these attempts failed due to poor planning, awkward and ineffective capitalization approaches, and resistance from non-Indian farmers.

While other aspects of a culture will tend to decline and even disappear on their own with the elimination of a peoples' economy, European attempts to destroy the Indian culture were actually quite pro-active. Euro-Canadian cultural genocide policies targeted on the "Indian peoples" included the legal suppression of many indigenous customs, the placement of indigenous children in residential boarding schools where Indian languages and spiritual rituals were forbidden on pain of punishment (often corporal). As part of being overwhelmed by "Western" culture, indigenous cultural suppression occurred more generally through the use of negative or paternalistic stereotypes in non-aboriginal literature and drama.

Federal "Indian Agents," who were not themselves aboriginal, virtually "operated" reserves as trustees on behalf of the Crown. These individuals had enormous discretionary power. With the authority and resources of the Government of Canada behind them, the Agent could and often did rule with an iron hand, firmly establishing dependency as a virtual characteristic of most reserves. Under the hands of the Agents, the size of many reserves actually shrank, as the Agent would use, sometimes illegally, land sales and the Band's trust monies inappropriately to pay off current debts. The Agents were also responsible for the introduction of a "class system" onto reserves, working with selected "leading families," who were expected to be role models as farmers and to act as secondary decision-makers, giving local force to federal government decisions.

Traditionally Indian leaders acted as servants of their people; however, under colonial political and administrative structures, which were based on a hierarchical authority system imposed by the federal government, Indian leaders were cast in the role of managers of their people. As some observers argue, traditional systems of Indian leadership were transformed into a ruling-class system. This process began upon first contact. Government officials exploited the lack of formal political organization in Indian communities by following a practice of providing political and economic rewards to selected families who were willing to ally themselves with the government. The traditional system of leadership was subverted through a process by which the Indian Agent would channel essential goods and services to band/tribes through such compliant Indian families, thus empowering them to

disproportionately benefit themselves, their family members and followers. The effect of this process was surely to alienate the "outsiders" and to destroy the traditional grasslands authority system, based largely on a community of peers. While the electoral Band Council system, initiated under the Indian Act in 1951, gradually replaced the Indian Agent/leading family system, the choice being "given" to Indians by the Act was essentially one of electing a special administrative leadership class--a class that was increasingly given the authority to administer Department of Indian Affairs policies on reserves. The traditional consensus-building process was circumvented completely.

c. ***The Residential School System.*** One of the primary institutional mechanisms through which the Federal Government's assimilation policy was implemented was the residential school system. Beginning in the 1830s mission schools were established and, in the latter part of the 1880s, industrial schools which taught agriculture and homemaking skills were established. Beginning in the early part of the twentieth century, residential schools were established. Most of the residential schools operated until the 1960s.

Children as young as five and six years old were placed in residential schools and essentially raised without benefit of family or tradition, removing the usual social mechanisms through which people learned how to parent. As Daily has commented:

Separation of the children culturally and geographically from parents and their way of life had a drastic impact on almost all Indian families. The structure, cohesion and quality of family life suffered. Old productive skills tied to the land were lost. Parenting skills diminished as succeeding generations became more and more institutionalized and less and less experienced in nurturing. Low self esteem and self-concept problems arose as children were taught that their own culture was inferior and uncivilized, even 'savage' (Daily and Hodgson, in Martens, 1988).

In the residential schools, Indian children were taught English or French and were punished if they communicated in their aboriginal language. They were also restricted from practising their own customs and they were taught that many of their own habits were "uncivilized," "backward" or "unhealthy," and that many of their spiritual beliefs were evil (e.g., the phrase, "the work of the devil" was frequent). The children were taught that their traditional cultural practices were "primitive" and deserving of contempt rather than pride.

d. ***The Second Major Source of Family Separation: The Child Welfare System***

After the second World War, the Federal Government began to slowly phase out its residential schools. The historic pressures on the Native family after Euro-Canadian settlement had resulted in a common pattern of dysfunctional family systems. Traditional parenting skills had been undermined or lost after generations of parent-child separations through the residential schools combined with widespread unemployment, alcohol abuse and a spiritual and moral ambiguity born of harsh but ineffective assimilationist policies. The traditionally active role of grandparents in the care of children had waned over time with the

absence of the children.

Ironically, as a corrective response to the disabling of the Indian family system, the provincial governments began to take assertive "remedial" action. Under the British North America Act (the original Canadian Constitution), the province's were responsible for child welfare, arguably for all children in their jurisdictions, including Indian children. Departments of social services intervened in vast numbers of dysfunctional First Nations' families and took children into protective custody. Great numbers of children were taken into care and placed in foster families, group homes or adoptive homes. These substitute care arrangements often placed Indian children at great distances from their own families, many never having contact with them again. In the 1960s, this type of apprehension and child separation reached such a high level that some reserves lost an entire generation of their own children to the child welfare authorities.

6. Welfare Dependency and Disempowerment

Until Confederation, there were virtually no resources provided directly by the Federal Government to Indian reserve communities. As Canada industrialized and gave birth to the welfare state, the failure of assimilationist policies and the relative economic poverty of Indian people became increasingly apparent. The solution of basic housing, rations in the form of flour and limited purchases of bulk foods at grocery stores gave way to social assistance in the 1950s. A few bands actually continued to be self-supporting until that time, largely in the more remote and northern areas, and most were made up of people who hunted, trapped, fished and did seasonal work in the agricultural or building construction sectors of the economy. However, that independence was gradually undermined in most communities and, today, many Indians are second- and third-generation dependents on social assistance funding that extends, with few breaks, throughout their entire lives.

Most Indian communities are either on relatively unproductive land from a mineral or agricultural production perspective, are too remote or too ill-suited for industrial development, or they are simply far too small to support the size of the populations of the band membership for which they are reserved.

The Saskatchewan and Canadian Indian unemployment rate is approximately 2.5 times higher than the Canadian average--a figure which rises to 3 times as high for reserve residents (see Statistics Canada, *1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey* [1993]). Unemployment is related to income, of course. Not surprisingly, Indian incomes are substantially lower than those of the average non-Indian (*Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 1991*). While 39% of adult Canadians earn incomes less than \$10,000 per annum in the early 1990s, almost two-thirds (64%) of Indians in Canada reported an income under \$10,000 in 1990.

Relative to their non-aboriginal counterparts, the adult incomes of Status Indians tend to come from different sources, with far fewer Indians receiving their major source of income from permanent, paid employment than the general population. Relatively more Indian income typically comes from seasonal and casual employment and the "underground" or

"barter" economy, and aboriginal people are far more likely than average to rely on social assistance. According to the *1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey* (1993), a polling of the majority of adult Indians in Canada indicated that 33% of Indian adults received social assistance in the past year, a figure which is approximately 3 times higher than the equivalent figure for non-aboriginal Saskatchewan residents in the adult/under 65-year age grouping

3.4 CODEPENDENCY AND NEGATIVE THINKING STYLES

The pressures and influences of this background of economic transformation, societal dislocation, unemployment and poverty, family disruption and substance abuse and addictions have created widespread problems that affect both aboriginal parents and their children. The recent social and cognitive intervention literature has described two kinds of unhealthy social-psychological patterns that appear to be widespread in Native communities and which, no doubt, originate in the historical factors described above.

3.4.1 - CODEPENDENCY

Codependence is a style of thinking and relating involving a self-absorption or preoccupation with consistently meeting one's own immediate needs—a condition that grows out of a background of emotional deprivation in childhood. Codependence is an active, if only partly conscious, preoccupation with one's own sense of being wounded; it is an extreme, self-consciousness and heightened sensitivity to one's own emotional pain. Its sources are inadequate experiences of basic recognition, abuse or lack of nurturance in childhood. The codependent's behaviour is characterized by compulsive attempts (1) to control people in order to get unmet needs satisfied and/or (2) to become dependent upon controlling, forceful personalities or, especially in the case of adolescents, to become dependent upon the suasion of either forceful individuals or cliques or gangs, yielding one's individuality to the guidance of others who provide an influence that is either destructive of self or others or (3) to seek gratification in some substance or activity that supplies the missing sense of identity, bondedness to other people, and self-esteem. It is the constant attempt to become proud as a means of compensating for a sense of shame that dominated extended periods of one's formative years.

A child is emotionally wounded when anything interferes with her parents' ability to meet her basic needs for nurturance. When basic nurturance is denied, appropriate ego development does not occur. It is as if the ego's growth was stunted. In a family system in which the parents are incapable of nurture because they themselves have lacked an experience of adequate nurture in their own backgrounds, children learn to act destructively and to relate to one another in destructive ways. They "adjust" to the family system by avoiding reality, running away, medicating feelings, expressing rage, blaming, controlling, coercing and demanding. S/he does not acquire mature social skills but instead acts in a way that is always "correcting" for the inappropriate role behaviour of parents: acting like a controlling matriarch; being everyone's clown; acting constantly like the "tough guy" in order to avoid

feelings and have some control over the immediate social environment; or escaping through avoidance as a street person, hobo, or through addictive medications that create a perceptually blurry forgetfulness.

3.4.2 - NEGATIVE THINKING STYLES

Troubled families also inspire troubled thinking. Several schools of applied psychology, from *Transactional Analysis* through *Reality Therapy* to *Rational-emotive Therapy* and *Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy*, have identified and described how certain thinking styles, learned in the family home, deposit a heavy burden of self-demeaning or ineffective responses to problems that demand solution. As several therapists have phrased it, people from troubled families acquire thousands of hours of memory tapes that play back negative self-messages. Others say that the children of troubled families are often "programmed" to think negative thoughts or to respond to problems as annoyances and frustrations rather than as challenges to be overcome and from which lessons can be extracted. Still others, preferring metaphors from the world of drama, suggest that we should consider ourselves as learning various scripts to act out the major roles we must play in our lives; unfortunately, some of those roles are empowering while others, such as those rehearsed so many times in the lives of children raised in troubled families with codependent parents, are scripted to enact roles that are disempowering for themselves or for other people. Even those roles that involve the controlling of others are scripted in the fashion of a zero sum game: One's own satisfaction is gained at the expense of the submission of other's to our will.

Some of the more common types of distorted thinking include:

- ☐ *All-or-nothing thinking*: Thinking rooted in the belief that if you don't or can't have all of something you would like, you've got nothing (e.g., If the most popular kid on the reserve won't be my friend, then nobody will want to be my friend).
- ☐ *Overgeneralizing*: This involves a failure to think through the relationship between a single or a few experiences and the likelihood that those experiences will always occur. Basically, it involves generalizing from a few experiences to all possible experiences that have something in common.
- ☐ *Paranoid thinking*: This involves the tendency to think that other people are conspiring against us.
- ☐ *Negative Comparisons*: We all make negative comparisons but when we make a habit of always comparing what we have or what we are or what we can do with others and feeling frustrated or hurt if they have more than us, then we are inviting constant hurt and sadness.
- ☐ *Catastrophizing*: This involves the tendency to magnify the possibilities of negative consequences of an event or, in a phrase, "making a mountain out of a mole hill."

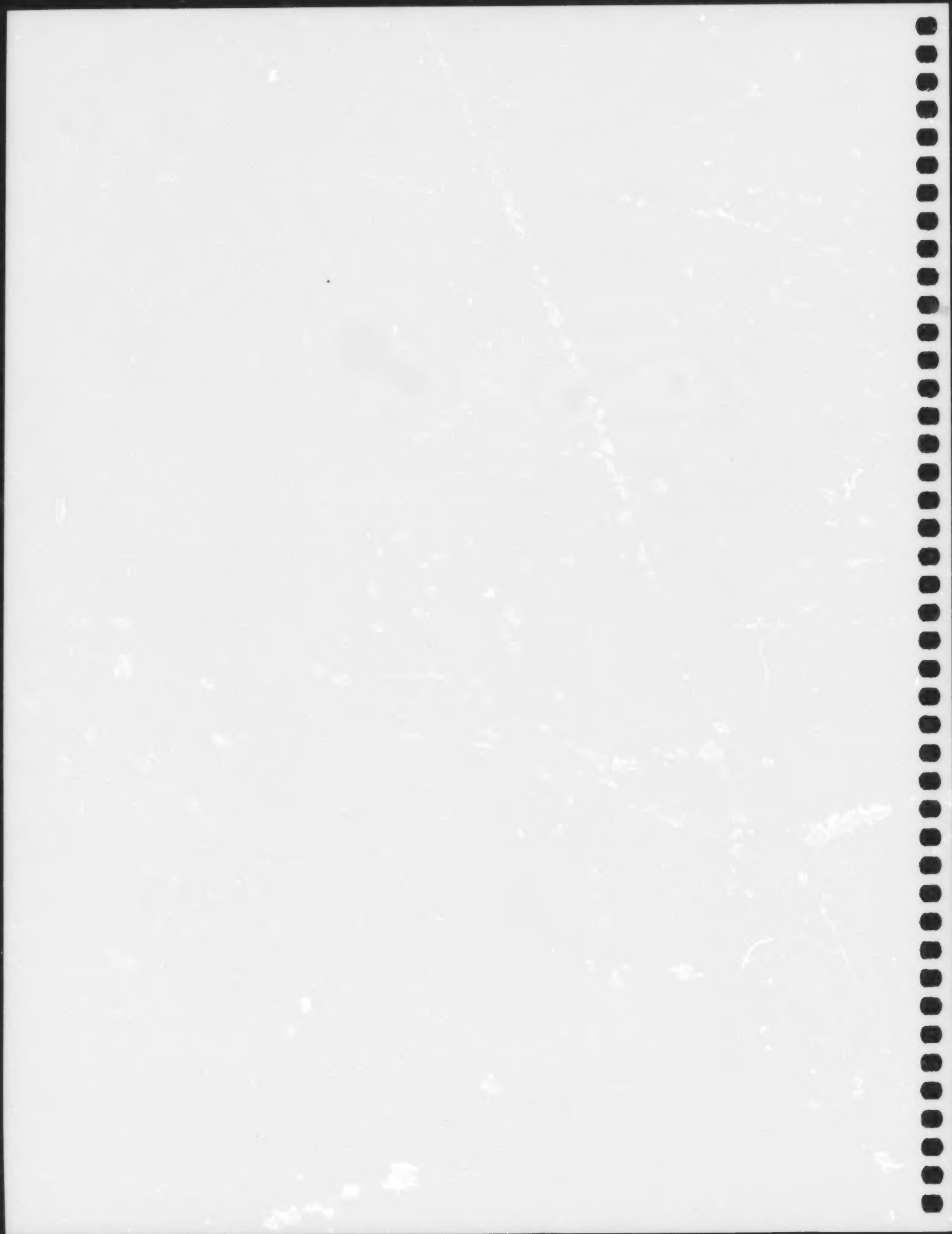
These thought patterns and several others are very common amongst people who have experienced inadequate, abusive, inconsistent nurture or abandonment in their formative years.

3.5 CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made to show that, while adolescence is a perilous journey into adulthood for all youth in Canada, it is particularly risky travel for those children with cultural and social roots in the First Nations. As the cursory outline in this chapter of a complex social history has suggested, the exceptional social health risks confronting Indian youth have arisen out of the blocked adaptation of the traditional family system to the dramatic social change introduced to their world by peoples with ancestry in offshore locales. The adaptation process was blocked by an unsuccessful and indeed calamitous policy of forced assimilation, by the destruction of the indigenous male's economic role, and by a failure of Canadian leaders to strike revenue sharing arrangements that could have formed the basis for economic interdependence between First Nations and Canada rather than one-way dependence.

The most direct connections between the incapacity of the Indian family to adapt and the risks of adolescence lies both with the disabling, multi-generational effects of imported diseases and the impact of the residential schools. The residential school experience appears to have played a substantial role in destroying the knowledge, skills, and orientation to parenting that would normally be learned most fundamentally through the modelling of behaviours by parents with their children at their side.

While that history cannot be changed, positive community development in the future can materialize, through a robust combination of compensatory assistance from non-aboriginal governments and from internal self-determination. Further, dysfunctional social behaviours and thinking styles can be learned that will spawn emotionally healthy, productive and non-addicted residents. It is hoped that the Vision Seekers program, which combines community development with personal, family and group development, can help many young people of First Nations' communities overcome the obstacles on their path to a satisfying and socially productive adulthood.



4.0 VISION SEEKERS AS A SET OF IDEAS AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

As described in Chapter 3, First Nations traditionally had their own ideas about how child care and socialization should occur. They had various means of providing healthy nurture for their children and ways to enable their transition from childhood to adulthood. The traditional systems used included:

- extended families;
- the key role of Grandparents in child-rearing;
- the concept that the *whole community* was responsible for raising a child;
- the situating of Elders as important communicators of values, traditions and as teachers through storytelling and practical skill-training;
- the use of Healers;
- the use of ceremonies and rituals that bonded children to the community; and
- a graduated path of responsibility for each individual, marked by rites of passage at different stages of emotional, psychological and physical maturation.

Unfortunately, much of the traditional system of nurture is no longer intact. Under the strains of Euro-Canadian encroachment and the transformations associated with social and technological change, nurturing traditions were displaced by systems that have too often proven inadequate. The challenges of nurture have simply proven too substantial for parents who are part of traditional cultures overwhelmed by an imposed and in many ways unwelcome modernity ruled largely by relative newcomers; as a consequence:

- ☐ Definitive parenting roles are no longer intact, and the displacement of traditional parenting practices as a result of residential schooling separations of children from families and social change in general have diminished the knowledge, skill and value base necessary to pursue the parenting role adequately.
- ☐ Traditional means of designating older people as spiritual Elders have disappeared in many communities. Traditional healing and practical wisdom and spiritual advice from respected Elders is not available in many if not most aboriginal settlements in Canada, nor is it available in the cities. Elders tend to experience children as being disrespectful.
- ☐ Traditional grandparents paid a primary role in child care in aboriginal communities. Today, the obligations of grandparents tend to be based on choice rather than clearly defined local custom—and grandparents, who may be as young as thirty, often experience such intense troubles of their own that they are not able to provide adequate back-up support for younger parents.
- ☐ Defined, idealized paths to adulthood, marked tangibly by specific rites of passage and reinforced by local ceremony are no longer commonplace.

While much that is traditional has been lost, the needs and skills required for a community, a family and parents to raise children have been transformed by the realities of modern, Western society. Market economics, which are increasingly global, technology and other aspects of Western, industrial and post-industrial culture impose themselves with enormous influence on children and youth. The sway on youth of the popular culture conveyed through the mass media by advertisers, film makers, television show producers, musicians, singers and writers cannot be easily challenged directly by parents or community leaders, even if they find much of the media output offensive or undermining of local values.

As First Nations strive to secure their own means of economic production, self-government and unique social institutions, it is essential that both traditional approaches and creative, new approaches are experimented with to address the problems of young people whose backgrounds tend to deter them from healthy lifestyles. The resilient ideas of old must be integrated with new ideas, specifically sensitized both to the consequences of social change for first peoples and to the realities of the contemporary, continuously changing social environment of today.

The Vision Seekers program is intended to teach, encourage, entertain, pressure and cajole young First Nations' adolescents into adopting healthy rather than destructive lifestyles. It draws upon both traditional and current personal growth concepts and it encourages locally distinctive social and cultural "customizing" of program activities. The basic idea behind the program is to integrate traditional and locally specific solutions with those found to work with youth confronting similar realities in communities throughout North America. The product of this integration is a multi-dimensional strategy—a strategy intended to empower disadvantaged young teens with the same motivation and skills of those fortunate children who have learned, partly from their parents, substitute caregivers or siblings, and partly on their own, to flourish, despite the adversity that has embraced their lives.

The fundamental program elements in Vision Seekers involve those at-risk youth, aged 12 to 14, in a two-year long program of after-school, recreational and group learning activities, a summer camp experience, and support from a counsellor, parents or caregivers, in-school mentors and community leaders.

As noted above, research has shown that there are a number of *risk factors*, emerging throughout the course of child development, that increase the chances of drug and alcohol abuse and other forms of anti-self and antisocial behaviour patterns amongst adolescents. These risk factors are strongly related to the socio-economic status of parents and to the state of the family system in which the child or adolescent is nurtured.

In First Nations' communities, unemployment levels amongst family heads are extremely high, as are the associated low incomes, and hence low socio-economic status is so common as to be characteristic. Survey research, key informant surveys and various other indicators strongly suggest that family violence, child physical and sexual abuse, and child neglect are disproportionately frequent problems amongst families in contemporary First Nations reserve communities. The primary and secondary effects of poverty place heavy burdens on the life course of children. Clearly, these conditions are the breeding grounds of unhappy, reactive

and anxious rather than contented children, who either retreat into depression, withdrawal or self-destruction or act out their anger rebelliously to escape or avenge their unhappiness, often unconsciously crying out for help from caregivers and the community.

The children of impoverished, dysfunctional families, often have little resistance to peer pressure or they are proactively the initiators of negative peer pressure. Consequently, such children are likely to experiment with smoking in their early years; they also abuse alcohol and drugs, often beginning with gas-sniffing at a young age, and they are likely to be in conflict with the law when they are very young. Tragically, all too often, these indirect signals for help are not heard or they fall on deaf ears; consequently, these at-risk youth will, predictably, spend most of their lifetimes unemployed, poor and personally unfulfilled. Striking out at others, many will leave the reserves to become lost to the urban streets at an early age, where they are likely to be severely victimized, physically, emotionally and sexually—and many themselves will become victimizers, far too many being incarcerated, jailed for lengthy periods of their lives.

As the compelling phrase "Our children are our future!" suggests, a First Nation has much at stake in the quality of care that is given to its dependent young. Research has shown that programs targeted on the dependent young exposed to high social and physical risk levels must intervene at the community and family levels of intervention, as well as directly with individuals.

4.1 VISION SEEKERS—A SECONDARY PREVENTION PROGRAM

In the relevant applied social science literature, primary prevention is defined as mental health promotion that is targeted on healthy individuals and is oriented towards the promotion of health in entire populations by providing information and encouraging healthy self- and dependent care, health enhancement and injury prevention. The fundamental goal is to lower the incidence of a condition-- i.e., the number cases of new illness, injury or personal or social adjustment problems in a population. While some of the most influential writers in the field would refer to such programs as Vision Seekers as a "primary prevention" program, in our view, the term *secondary intervention* is far more appropriate.

Our view of *secondary prevention* activity is that it involves targeting interventions on groups at predictably high risk of experiencing unhealthy or unsafe conditions and/or of acquiring acutely self-destructive or anti-social behaviour patterns *before* those conditions or patterns cause irreversible damage. Secondary intervention is concerned with addressing the problems already in evidence in their early stages in a particular group and preventing the continuance and intensification of those problems. By contrast, primary prevention is targeted on preventing the onset of risks and occurrences of unhealthy attitudes and behaviours *before* they have even begun. Reflecting the definition of secondary intervention adopted in this book, Durlak has observed:

In contrast to primary intervention, which intervenes with healthy populations, secondary prevention involves some systematic screening or evaluation process

to identify those in a population displaying early signs of dysfunction. Only such individuals showing such difficulties are targeted for treatment. The basic goal of secondary prevention is to prevent serious maladjustment from occurring by helping those who have subclinical difficulties (1995:5-6).

4.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: SOCIO-COGNITIVE ANIMATION

The Vision Seekers program grows out of an approach to community development that can best be referred to as *socio-cognitive animation*. Theoretically, *the approach primarily draws upon clinical sociology and applied cognitive-behavioural psychology*; in essence, it consciously borrows from relevant, empirically-tested concepts from the applied social sciences and applies them to the challenge of empowering local people to facilitate social change within the distinctive context of their own cultures and community social structures. As an organized approach to social work, it draws upon two of the classical pillars of the profession, namely *clinical intervention* (traditionally referred to as "casework" and "group work") and *community organization*.

Inevitably, there will be those who will argue that our approach should make more substantial reference to the specific heritage of First Nations. The author strongly challenges such a view on several grounds. By its very nature socio-cognitive animation can be defended against the accusation that it stresses the general theoretical and empirical knowledge of the social sciences at the expense of the knowledge of indigenous cultures.

In fact, social science research is used as a practical and *realistic* way of discovering and carefully describing both current cultural realities and traditions that have been lost to the children of a community. The use of social science provides a framework for *systematically* examining *both* traditional cultures and current community realities.

Second, in its approach to assisting community development efforts, socio-cognitive animation borrows from applied sociology, which offers a set of conceptual tools that enable project participants to develop an "systems" perspective on the social and economic realities of their communities.

Third, socio-cognitive animation can help community development initiators to learn from the experience of other First Nations. It assists in an understanding of the social and economic transformations that First Nations have experienced through interactions with the White settler society. Sociocognitive animation provides the comparative tools to examine the experience of other First Nations and oppressed societies and social groups which have effectively revitalized their communities, despite the similar adversities that they have faced.

Finally, the very nature of the enabling process facilitated by sociocognitive animation ensures that, for the intended change to actually take place, it will necessarily have the stamp of cultural approval of the local community leadership itself.

The sociocognitive animation approach can also be defended against being *nonaboriginal* because, in fact, the approach introduces and encourages the use of *action research* or

participatory research as an evaluation method. Through action research, the practice of community development ensures that local cultural realities are integral to the process of development itself. The term action research refers to what social psychologist Kurt Lewin described as a marriage of the experimental approach for the social sciences with programs of social action in response to major problems of the times. According to Lewin, individuals who are keen to discover solutions to practical social problems should participate both as investigators and as change agents or, Lewin was known to say, as both "thinkers and doers." Action research is intended to consist of analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution and more fact-finding or evaluation—and then a repetition of this entire sequence in a spiralling process until the stakeholders find that they are generally satisfied with the results.

Sociocognitive Animation as Community Health Development

The socio-cognitive animation approach is fundamentally an approach to health promotion. The model of health promotion that it adheres to is an ecological model which views an individual's health as the product of continuous interaction and interdependence with his or her ecosphere—which is, the family, the community, the culture, the societal structure, and the physical environment. According to this model,

Characteristic modes of interacting over time constitute a life-style, as distinct from discrete acts or behaviour. The determinants of lifestyle must be seen as a combination of intrapersonal and external environmental forces, continuously interacting. In some instances, health promotion programs need to emphasize the individual or behavioural side; in others, the environmental side needs emphasis as the point of intervention. If the individual has a sense of harmony with, or a degree of mastery over, the everyday environment, then his or her health is likely to be good. But with oppression, poverty, limited opportunity, and lack of mastery, health will suffer (Green and Raeburn, 1990: 31).

The sociocognitive animation approach is an approach to community and personal development geared to communities which are characterized by high levels of unemployment, relative impoverishment, low levels of education in the population, and significantly higher than average rates of physical, social and mental health problems. It is also geared to communities with abnormally low levels of local control over resources needed for economic or social development. Most but not all reserve communities tend to fit clearly into such a profile.

4.2.1 - THE PROGRAM ASSUMPTIONS OF VISION SEEKERS

Research supports the view that,

- a. Healthy social bonding is a significant factor in a child's resistance to peer pressure to participate in anti-social behaviour and substance abuse. Strong prosocial bonds are a

function of (1) *attachment* - positive relationships with others (2) *commitment* - an investment in the future and (3) *belief* about what is right and wrong, with an orientation to positive, moral behaviour and action.

- b. Attachment, commitment and moral clarity are, in turn, heavily influenced by healthy parenting in which (i) there is considerable *commitment*, which means an investment of time ("quality time" and sufficient time) and energy in managing family matters and participating with the family in various group activities (ii) frequently expressed, *mutual appreciation* by family members (iii) *emphasis on good communications*, including the clearing up of misunderstandings and problem-solving (iv) *spiritual wellness*, as expressed by a moral code [successful families practice what they preach] (v) the *ability to cope with crises* (vii) a balance of loyalty between family members and independence and freedom of thought and action for individual family members.
- c. Children are very resilient. Even when the parents of children are incapable of providing healthy nurture, extended family, community members and human service volunteers and professionals can intervene in ways that can set the child on a path that will lead to an adult life of personal satisfaction, balance and maturity. The community raises the child, *not* the family alone. As the curriculum of a leading Indian child welfare education program states:

Child rearing in the Indian culture is not solely a private affair. Parents, extended family, clan, and tribe all share responsibility for the well-being of the children (Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, Module I, Heritage and Helping: A Model Curriculum for Indian child welfare practice, 'Basic Skills in Indian Child Welfare, Parry Centre for Children, Portland, Oregon, 1984).

This path to personal satisfaction, balance and maturity is prepared by actively providing children with meaningful social attachments and learning experiences; it is also prepared by modelling positive behaviours for them and by demonstrating the value of discipline, the rewards of group co-operation and personal responsibility, and by facilitating the acquisition of cognitive and behavioural self-empowerment skills. The path to healing is also prepared by demonstrating genuine care and affection on a consistent basis over a considerable length of time. The primary motivators in Vision Seekers are the authoritative and caring adults and the positive pressure and support of ongoing, structured and unstructured but always purposeful, interactions with a group of peers. With caring adults as guides, coaches and shoulders to cry on, and by spending recreational time and sharing project work with peers, and by setting goals and defeating obstacles, the cycle of disadvantage that is beginning to characterize the lives of young aboriginal people can be interrupted.

4.2.2- REQUIREMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS AT HIGH SOCIAL RISK

This author's review of the relevant literature on community-based primary prevention programs indicated that the following principles were especially important for successful programming:

1. There should be collaboration among the major environments that affect youth (school, community, and family) in promoting the program and jointly reinforcing the child's participation and commitment.
2. There should be at least some parental or extended family involvement with the program.
3. It is far easier to help a child if the parents are able to participate in a supportive, positive way. Through case management processes linking the key social service personnel working in the community, the program should assist parents with their personal problem-solving efforts in order to empower them, as parents.
4. Formal community leaders, such as Chiefs and Councillors, Health Board members and educational leaders should believe in the program and be actively supportive of it.
5. It is also important to have the support — and, at a minimum, *not* the outright resistance — of informal influence leaders— members of the community, including Elders, peers of the children participating, and those who must provide some aspect of practical support.
6. It is important to include and to have the "buy in" to the program of participants who are regarded as natural leaders among their peers, even if those children are the most difficult to reach.
7. The staff directly involved in the program *must* be competent, with the staff mix sharing a combination of relevant training and experience in social group work and physical activity education and recreational planning.
8. The staff should faithfully refer to and take guidance from the program materials, even if significant modifications are continuously made to them. The written materials are friends in a social space that is often very lonely (i.e., Ultimately, core staff are very much left to their own devices in operating the program). They are also particularly helpful in a work environment that can often seem quite chaotic, it provides a basis for structure and discipline.
9. The staff should be respected not only socially but morally by the children because much of the success of the program depends upon role-modelling.
10. Staff should also be knowledgeable (or become knowledgeable) regarding the local and traditional community culture and be respectful of the local norms. In turn, the staff should themselves behave in ways that commands the respect of the general membership and leadership of the community. Community leaders should visibly display their respect for the program staff in order to model the levels of respect that are deserving the operators of such a program.

11. The program organizers should be careful to prepare a comprehensive security policy to protect the rights and safety of the children and the staff. That policy should include a participants' rights organization that meets on a regular basis to review the program, its treatment of the participants, and to prepare requests for changes in programming, expectations of children, or staff behaviour and to submit those requests to the Vision Seekers Board.

4.3 PROGRAM MISSION AND PRACTICAL GOALS

The mission of the Vision Seekers program can be formally stated as follows:

Vision Seekers is intended to facilitate substantial, measurable improvement in the attitudes, values, behaviours and family circumstances of at-risk adolescents by providing structured social learning experiences as well as academic support and recreational activities that will better prepare them to constructively adapt to adversity through personal empowerment and healthy social bonding.

This mission has been adopted as the guiding purpose of this book and the principles behind the programming its author hopes to spawn. The organizer's of each program may want to adopt this mission statement or they may want to develop their own, hopefully reflecting a somewhat similar purpose. Whatever the case, the it is important that some time be spent considering the mission and goal statement of the program because local ownership of the program is critical to its success.

There are specific goals that have been set to guide the preparation of the Vision Seekers program. The program is intended :

1. To establish and implement a system of identifying pre-adolescent children (12-14 years old) at high social risk.
2. To recruit and secure a commitment to participation in the program by both the children identified to be at high social risk (HSR) and their families.
3. To provide the families of identified HSR children with family counselling and specialized intervention supports, in individual, family and group contexts.
4. To involve HSR children, their parents, the program, and key community leaders in a personal goal-setting process with each child.
5. To organize and implement an after-school program that assists and encourages the child's pursuit of his/her Vision Seeker's goals, as well as comprising personal development training, socializing, group discussions, counselling, recreation, and community service activities.
6. To develop a mentor support system in each child's school and to involve the school in supporting the child's project work aimed at the achievement of specific academic goals.

7. To establish and teach HSR children in the use of a personal safety system (the *Security Circle*) that assists them to secure protection from threatening situations, whether in the home, with other children or in other circumstances.
8. To provide the children with summer camp experiences based on a traditional "mini-society" concept and involving each child in an age-appropriate, highly individualized challenge — Vision Quest — experience.

4.4 THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN

It takes a number of people to develop and implement a Vision Seekers Program. Obviously, there are variations that will be demanded by your particular circumstances but, your program will probably benefit from a recommended list of "main players" on the Vision Seekers "team."

Give serious consideration to including all of the people and positions described below.

4.4.1 - OVERSIGHT

A Vision Seekers' **Steering Committee** should be established, that would be responsible for approving the general start-up strategy, approving its operational policies and hiring a Project Director (or "Coordinator"). The policies and lines of authority could be unique to the program or they could be integrated with the policy manual and organizational structure of your Band administration or community school or recreational authority (i.e., in an off-reserve, urban setting).

In order to ensure continuity from program inception through implementation, it would be useful to select your start-up Steering Committee members on the basis of the people you think could act as a **permanent oversight body**, such as a **Vision Seekers Sub-committee** of the Health Board or the School Board or an independent **Vision Seekers Board**.

Consider the following criteria in seeking board/committee members:

- commitment to the program purpose
- reliability and judgement
- a knowledge of child and youth issues in the community
- leadership status in the community or influence on community leadership

4.4.2 - OPERATIONAL CO-ORDINATION

An individual should be hired or contracted to serve as the Program Director, acting as primary program delivery agent and contact person with the participants, project administrator and the Steering Committee. Drawing carefully upon the program description

in this text and under the direction of the Steering Committee, the Director (or "Coordinator," depending on the preferred designation of the hosting organization) would be responsible for the following specific activities and tasks:

- reviewing Steering Committee policies and recommending any necessary changes to the newly struck Board;
- preparing detailed program action plans based largely on the Vision Seekers material presented in Volume 1 and 2 to recommend to the Steering Committee;
- preparing a structured program activity plan in conjunction with other staff;
- preparing children and families for program participation;
- participating with Counsellors in case conferencing;
- acting as Executive-Secretary to the Steering Committee;
- facilitating and supervising the after-school program;
- acting as the *primary social group worker* in the after-school program;
- initiating the in-school Mentor program, recruiting Mentors (including arranging for screening), and providing co-ordination and support services to the Mentors;
- organizing at least one weekend activity for participants at least every month-and-a-half;
- organizing excursions for participants;
- planning, co-ordinating and supervising staff at the program's summer camp;
- explaining the program to Chief and Council, Band members or relevant urban community leaders and other interested parties.

Ideal Qualifications

The Director should be an individual who has formal training or experience as a social group worker or as an educator with experience in informal education and the facilitation of small group discussions, as well as at least two years of related experience. S/he should also have the following qualities:

- Experience working with troubled children and teens.
- A proven ability to handle discipline problems with youth.
- Strong leadership abilities.
- Management and administrative ability, including the ability to manage a budget appropriately and effectively (Often, the financial management dimension of the coordination function might better be assigned to a bookkeeper/accountant, however).
- A clearly observed reputation as a self-starter capable of independent work in an

environment in which relatively limited supervisory or collegial support is provided

- A willingness to study program materials and adapt them to the local setting
- Successful training in small group facilitation or social group work (or a sincere interest in group work and a willingness to participate in formal training in group work methods).
- A high acceptance level in the community and with the participants and their parents
- A strong ethical commitment to programming of this kind.

4.4.3 - SECRETARIAL SUPPORT

If possible, a paid secretary/bookkeeper should be hired on a part-time basis. In the case of either a school-based program or urban neighbourhood/recreation association, an attempt should be made to obtain the services of a staff stenographer to provide the Steering Committee and later the Board (or committee) with these services.

4.4.4 - RECREATION COORDINATOR

The Recreation Coordinator would typically be the second in command and, typically managing the recreation program but also acting as Co-facilitator of the social group work exercises in the after-school program.

The Coordinator would develop, organize and facilitate most of the after-school sport and recreation activity, assist participants in the development of a hobby/leisure time skill, as well as organizing excursions during after-school, night or holiday time. S/he would also be actively involved in the summer camp experience, either as overall Camp Chief or second in command. The Recreation Coordinator would also act as cover-off for the Director and be a part of the security wheel network.

4.4.5 - CONSULTING PROGRAM COUNSELLOR

A program counsellor should be secured to work with the program, on a part-time basis, in conjunction with program staff and as an extension of his/her counselling responsibilities. Responsibilities will include assisting participants in the setting of goals and in sustaining a commitment to them through the learning of effective problem-solving methods, as well as providing individual counselling and some family counselling and group work with the program. The Counsellor might also be called upon to assist in the participant selection process.

4.4.6 - ELDERS

Elders might be asked to serve as advisors, speakers, story-tellers and as prayer -sayers at significant Vision Seekers' ceremonies and formal functions.

4.4.7 - IN-SCHOOL MENTORS

Native Liaison Workers in the school system and interested teachers should be invited to participate and should be screened as supportive "Mentors" to work with each child. The Mentors will append his/her name to the child's Vision Seeker Treaty, with the addendum including both the child's responsibilities and the Mentor's responsibilities in relation to the in-school support. That support will include:

- once weekly half-hour discussion sessions related to school and program performance issues, both academic and behavioural, as well as any other concerns on the participant's mind,
- when necessary, arranging for specialized tutorial support for the participant;
- assisting and in other ways supporting the participant with the integration of his/her program goals into the ongoing curriculum and extracurricular activities of the school.

4.4.8 - COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

A Band's CHN and CHR (or local, urban public health educators) can be usefully involved in providing the following services:

- assistance in the identification and screening of participants
- when called upon and when time is available, providing workshops in the after-school program
- participating in case conferencing sessions when Vision Seeker children and their families are involved.

4.4.9 - POLICE

The local police should be involved by assisting with screening participants and as part of the "Security Wheel" dimension of the program.

4.5 THE PROGRAM AS A SEQUENCE OF CONNECTED ELEMENTS

The program can also partly be understood by outlining those recommended processes involving the youth that are intended to support the achievement of the program goals. It will include the following sequential but partially overlapping processes:

1. There will be a goal-setting process that would begin with an identification of the child's aptitudes, interests and aspirations and then, in consultation with the child and his parent(s), the setting of
 - one or more personal development goals (social skills and cognitive skills)
 - an academic goal (e.g., improvement in mathematics, etc.)
 - one or more hobby/recreational activity goals
 - a community service goal.
2. To achieve a powerful, symbolic affirmation of the participant's commitment to these goals, the signing of a Vision Seekers' Treaty that is also signed by the Chief (or a well-known community official), program staff and parents, is recommended.
3. Support for achieving these goals should be provided by the Program Director and the Recreation Coordinator as well as any assistant(s), peer (participants) group, and Mentors through:
 - individual counselling and counselling with the child's family present;
 - an after-school program organized around (a) recreational programming and (b) facilitated social learning groups involving seminars and group counselling dealing with a variety of knowledge and skill development topics, including
 - ▶ assistance with realistic goal setting
 - ▶ problem-solving and decision-making
 - ▶ building self-esteem
 - ▶ cultural pride
 - ▶ use of traditional Medicine Wheel concepts in personal development
 - ▶ coping with troubled family systems
 - ▶ healthy interpersonal relationships
 - ▶ positive attitudes towards race/ethnic relations
 - ▶ how to ask for help
 - ▶ understanding the impact of peer pressure on decision-making
 - ▶ resistance strategies for confronting peer pressure to use commonly abused substances
 - ▶ learning to believe in one's self and one's capabilities
 - ▶ learning to trust one's self and others

- ▶ how to avoid being a bully and getting bullied
- ▶ healthy male/female relationships
- ▶ conflict resolution skills
- ▶ dealing with anger constructively; and
- ▶ a special program component dealing with various issues around the risks of unprotected sexual activity, unplanned pregnancies, and adolescent parenting

This process can be enhanced through the active use of guest facilitators and role models

4. Occasional excursions are recommended, both after school and on weekends, mixing fun with learning.
5. Academic and recreational goal-achievement support should be provided from willing volunteer teacher (or, in a reserve school, teachers *assigned* to the program) or school official acting as a Mentor.
6. Protective support for individual children should be provided by a network of human service workers and police personnel who are committed to assisting young people if they are experiencing serious emotional problems or are facing serious risks of family violence, peer violence, or peer pressure to engage in unsafe sex or delinquent activity.
7. There should be one or two summer camp experiences, completed by a Vision Quest.

4.6 GROUP SIZE

While resources will ultimately determine what is possible in terms of the number of children involved in the program, a "rule of thumb" is that formally screened recruits should be serviced by staff in a ratio of two adults to no more than twelve participants (a staff-to-participant ratio of 1:6) for the after-school component of the program. A smaller group of eight (a ratio of 1:4) makes the task of intensive work and discipline much easier of course, but few reserves will have the luxury of operating a program with such small numbers. In fact, by the criteria we have used, in many reserves and inner-city communities, the majority of children would benefit from the program because they readily fit into the high social risk category. If the resources are available, especially the staff and the space, then no one should be excluded. In Band-controlled schools, it may be possible to develop the program so that all children who are interested and willing can participate. In such an instance, of course, the teachers and perhaps community health services staff and the local recreational coordinator (if there is one), would have to contribute time on a regular basis. A disadvantage of *not* including everyone is that, depending how the program is "sold" to the community, the children who are included are either stigmatized or viewed as getting special privileges by those who are not included.

The Need to 'Overbook'

It is an unwelcome but real aspect of work of this type that a drop-out factor *must* be taken into account. If you don't recruit more than the ideal ratio would suggest, you could wind up with a ridiculously small number of participants and would inevitably lose support in the community for the program. A rule of thumb is to *overbook* by a third, in other words, recruit a third more than you expect to ultimately include (18 instead of 12 participants). Also have a back-up list of participants who could benefit from the program and who fit the criteria.

4.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING AN APPROPRIATE AGE GROUP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLETING THE JOURNEY

It is important to encourage all children who start the program to go through the full two years of the program, because it involves a sequenced set of experiences, with activities and outcomes building on the previous ones—and a symbolically and emotionally powerful completion process facilitated through a vision quest experience.

The age variations in the group should not be so wide that differences make it awkward for staff and participants alike. After all, the Vision Seekers will be working together and intensely socializing and sharing recreational activities with one another for two years (hopefully), and if they don't, the full effectiveness of the program is lost. Thus all children should start at an age which will ensure that they are not too immature for the peer group (the last 3 months of their 11th year or the first three months of their 12th year) and which will allow them to participate for a full two years without getting too old for the age cohort that is targeted. If the children get into their later middle teenage years, they tend to create an entirely different atmosphere — and set of social group work and educational problems — that can demand program redesign involving several age group strategies. This can make it virtually impossible to meet the program goals for all the sub-groups and the group as a whole. Careful judgement in selecting the early ages must be made, of course, because age and maturity are only very roughly correlated.



5.0 A 'KID'S EYE VIEW' OF THE PROGRAM

One way to get a feel for the Vision Seekers program is to consider how the program might respond to the needs of a participant and what the personal experience of the program might be like. Three vignettes are presented in this chapter to help the reader better understand the program. It should be noted that these vignettes are fictional, manufactured solely for illustrative purposes, and that the names are *not* references to actual people. They are composites, woven together from the author's observations of real people and real situations.

John Thunderstone

John Thunderstone is a twelve year old boy of Cree ancestry who lives on a reserve in southern Saskatchewan. His father and his fourteen year old brother (whom John was formerly very close to), were both killed in a car accident two years prior to his twelfth birthday. He now lives with his mother, whom, like John, was also emotionally devastated by the tragic loss of her husband and son. Two older sisters also live in their home on the reserve but they are rarely at home, one spending most of her time in the city and the other working in a town an hour away from the reserve.

John is a quiet, reserved boy, who had suffered some physical abuse at the hands of his father but he had basically excused his father by blaming it on the latter's drinking problem, over which John believed his father had little control. When his father was sober, he was a good father and wonderful company, and, clearly, despite the abuse, John loved his father deeply.

John's brother Billy, who was his best friend and was, in some ways, almost a father to him, often protected him from the wrath of their father during his drinking episodes. As John said of Billy: "He seemed to know how to handle dad, how *not* to push his buttons and get up his fury!"

Billy was far more outgoing, and Johnny always referred to himself as "Billy's 'winger'," which, according to Mrs. Thunderstone, meant that, when they were together, Billy made most of the decisions and did virtually all of the talking to other kids and adults.

Upon the death of his older brother, Johnny had to fully confront his own shyness for the first time. According to his mother, "Now that John could no longer rely on Billy to do his talking for him, he didn't know how to act with other people." She said that, sometimes, Johnny seemed almost paralysed by his lack of skill or confidence in communicating, even in making the most mundane of small talk. Perhaps in a clumsy effort to cope with his shyness, as well as to vent his anger at the overwhelming sense of loss and sadness that had overcome him with the death of his brother and father, John started resisting any kind of authority and acting towards his peers in a defensive and at times confrontational way. His older brother had always been somewhat resistant to authority but, because of his generally sunny disposition and winning personality, he was usually forgiven for his minor acts of rebellion. Not so for John. When he began to challenge authority or to rebel in other ways, everything around him just seemed to crumble in on him. He was in the principal's office at school as

much as he was in the classroom and, despite his expectations, his trouble didn't make him more accepted by other kids; they just thought he had become difficult, hard to get along with, a "trouble-maker."

John began to miss school, to refuse to follow his mother's most basic instructions, and his school performance, which had been a source of pride to the family, started slipping. John had typically brought home report cards full of "A's" and "B's" but gradually, those marks slipped to "C's" and "D's," and even a couple of "E's." He began to directly challenge the authority of teachers when he was in class. On the playground, he began to pick fights, sometimes with kids he knew he simply couldn't handle, and he was beaten up pretty badly more than once. He also beat up one boy very badly.

The one thing that did prosper for John was a growing reputation for courage, which was not really courage at all. It was really just an expression of the fact that he simply wasn't concerned about taking care of himself anymore. In short, John was extremely angry and depressed, and he had a very legitimate basis to his anger. His acting out behaviour was essentially a symptom of the enormous sense of loss and abandonment that he had suffered and his inability to develop the necessary interpersonal skills required for him to overcome his shyness. He just couldn't seem to find the motivation or means to take responsibility for those aspects of his social life that had been managed for him by his late and much beloved brother.

After one too many incidents involving conflict and a host of truancies from school, John was referred to the school counsellor. Initially, he was not even willing to be cooperative in answering the most basic questions that the counsellor asked him. After thinking about various ways to break through his wall of resistance in order to assist John in dealing with his sadness and anger, the counsellor suggested to John and his mother that she felt he would benefit from the *Vision Seekers* program that was being operated by two school employees and some volunteers out of the school gym and school craft room.

Even though John heard the counsellor's words when she first introduced the idea, he didn't quite understand the basic program concept. At first he thought it was a kind of punishment for kids who were causing problems at school or getting into trouble with the law. The program had only been around for a couple of years and people at the reserve were not yet fully familiar with it nor clear about its objectives. In fact, the program's steering committee and staff were actively attempting to improve the community's awareness of *Vision Seekers* by preparing a brochure and planning to hold some public information meetings in the immediate future.

At the prompting of an uncle who Johnny greatly respected, John was willing to at least go to an initial interview with the Program Coordinator to get a full explanation of what *Vision Seekers* was all about. What he heard that convinced him to at least attend a first session was the fact that, like him, virtually all of the kids had experienced some form of tragedy or serious difficulties in their lives, and the Coordinator seemed confident when he said that most of them were enjoying the experience. The possibility of seriously pursuing his favourite hobby as part of the program was also an attraction. John loved to work with electronics,

taking radios, TVs and CD players apart and putting them back together. The Coordinator told him that, as part of his Vision Seekers experience, they would try to support him in pursuing this interest by finding someone who could teach him a few things.

A few days later, John participated in his first session in the program. The participants seemed a little cool to him that first day, despite the prompting of the Coordinator to get Johnny involved. He was shy and a little defensive with the group and before the first group discussion he began picking a fight with one of the other kids. Fortunately, the program assistant saw the trouble coming and he intervened immediately and cooled down the erupting conflict. The assistant so skilfully pretended that the incident was trivial, a "non-event," that the combatants quickly forgot about it. But the experience was not positive, on the whole, and when John went home, he told his mother that he wasn't going to have anything to do with Vision Seekers.

The next day, after school, John ran into one of the Vision Seekers' Mentors, who taught at the school. He told him that a friend of his was going to be doing an electronics lab with some of the kids at Vision Seekers the following week. It was the one teacher who John really liked. Even though he missed the next session of Vision Seekers, that night he said to his Mom, "I guess I'm going to try it again!"

"It was really hard at first," John says now. "I mean I just ran into the same problems talking and getting along with the kids that I had at school. But soon they (the staff) were teaching me how to talk when I'm shy and how to talk out my problems. We have these groups where you kinda talk about all kinds o' stuff ... and, for me, it really helped."

John goes to the after school program daily, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., which is a mixture of problem-solving in groups, recreation and sports, and working on personal and community projects. Once a month they go into the city, as a group, to eat out, take in a movie or go swimming or skating in the winter. At school Johnny gets time to work on his hobby and he sees his Mentor for a little chat and academic help at least once a week.

John's mother was herself a slow starter on the path of healing from the pain of losing her husband and older boy. She had reacted by virtually hiding at home, going out as rarely as she could. But with the encouragement of the Band Social Worker and the Vision Seekers' Coordinator, she made herself available for the first counselling sessions and she went to the Vision Seekers' Treaty signing ceremony. Even though she only comes to the counselling sessions irregularly, she is happy that John is going and she openly states that his behaviour at home has been consistently improving.

Gradually John's self-confidence and general attitude to other people have begun to improve. His counsellor had administered a depression assessment at the time he began the program and, recently, his reassessment indicated that his mental outlook had improved dramatically. He is now involved in a community volunteer project that does yard clean-up and snow removal for Elders and single parents. John's school performance is also gradually improving. Perhaps most important to John is his electronics hobby. For Christmas, for the uncle he has so much respect for, John rebuilt a television set.

Occasionally, John's grief overcomes him again and he acts out in ways that threaten his own success, both socially and academically. Thus far, however, John has been able to work through those tough periods and, in his words, "It's really the other kids, sometimes in the groups, that have got me through the shitty times."

John has only been in the program for six months, so he hasn't experienced the summer camp as yet, but he is truly looking forward to it. He'll be responsible for maintaining a base camp radio and he is hoping to learn a little bit about his traditional culture because his late father always said he wanted his children to learn more about the old ways and to respect their spiritual Elders.

Maevis Bearfoot

Maevis Bearfoot is a thirteen year old of mixed Blackfoot and Peigan ancestry who has recently moved back to her home reserve in Alberta after living in Vancouver, in the neighbouring province to the west, British Columbia. She had dropped out of elementary school in Vancouver, where she was staying with an aunt because her own mother had little influence on her. At the reserve, Maevis, who was physically mature in the latter months of her eleventh year, had been involved with a group of older teens who were often in trouble with the law, committing various delinquencies, including auto thefts and break-ins. Attractive and prematurely developed physically, Maevis was also sexually active. The aunt, who had agreed to take Maevis in after she was no longer willing to listen to her single parent mother, was a student at a Vancouver vocational institute. The break-up of a longstanding love relationship had shattered the aunt emotionally and she had resumed a street drug habit of several years prior. Her drug habit was essentially destroying her study habits and, to finance her addiction, she turned to occasional prostitution and a string of boyfriends whom, according to Maevis, were "simply used to get them to buy her drugs." One of the many men her aunt brought home enticed Maevis into a secretive sexual relationship. When the aunt discovered this, she was enraged with her boyfriend and angry with Maevis. She was also afraid that Maevis might run away and "wind up on the streets" making money as a prostitute, so the aunt she sent her back to the reserve in Alberta.

When Maevis returned to the reserve, her mother made every effort to get along with her and, for a while, their relationship seemed to be improving. Maevis reentered school to finish the second half of Grade 8 and her schoolwork and social life were relatively satisfactory. The difficulty was that Maevis could not accept her mother as an authority figure and, with some other kids — this time they were in her own age group — from the reserve, she took charge of her own after-school life and she observed no time limits that her mother placed on her for getting in at night.

With little supervision and with a shared sense of personal problems that had never been satisfactorily dealt with, Maevis and her friends began to engage in unsafe sex and substance abuse. It became widely known that they were sniffing glue and the Band NNADAP worker became alarmed, holding a community circle discussion that included Elders, the Chief and

Council and the parents of the children. Two of the children, including Maevis and a fourteen year old boy, were advised by the members of the circle to begin attending Vision Seekers or some other purposeful social activity. Maevis was also given a curfew and told that if she was caught using alcohol or glue she might have to go away to a residential school away from the reserve or a group home in Calgary. It was an officially "dry" reserve and the Elders and community leaders took its observance very seriously. It seemed very harsh to Maevis and even to her mother, but it did get her thinking about how serious the problem was. She was also instructed to participate in four counselling sessions with the NNADAP worker. While she did attend three counselling sessions, she subsequently ran away from home and was not apprehended for two months.

Maevis agreed to begin Vision Seekers the following year, her entry to coincide with the beginning of the next academic year at school. When asked to recollect that day, she now says: "I wasn't really going along with it. I wasn't going to go to Vision Seekers. I was just stalling. But later, after I went for a few sessions, I got to know this girl who I really liked and she was kind of having fun with it so I, like, started thinking it could be alright. So I hung in there. After a while, I got into it a bit, then a lot more."

The Program Coordinator says that Maevis didn't really participate wholly in the program until she was given some specific responsibilities in the community service program. The entire group in Vision Seekers had begun a project that had them involved as volunteers with a nearby institutional program for the developmentally disabled. According to the Program Coordinator, "Somehow, the responsibility, the authority that went along with coordinating this home visiting program with those children, really got her into it. It made her feel important and needed I guess. After that, things fell in place a little better."

Maevis did quit glue sniffing although she occasionally "parties," drinking wine or beer, but, gradually, she came to empathize with her mother who stayed up worrying when she didn't come home at a reasonable hour and so she generally began to honour her curfew.

Academically, Maevis had never been a strong learner, and that had been a source of frustration and even shame for her. Her school Mentor did arrange for some special testing and it was determined that she had a learning disability. That disability is now being addressed with tutorial support from a special education consultant and, gradually, Maevis's academic performance has been improving.

Asked what the most important thing that Vision Seekers has done for her, Maevis lists several. She says her schoolwork is now going well and the discussion groups and the individual sessions with a counsellor have helped her work through her feelings about the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of the casual boyfriend of her aunt's in Vancouver. She also says that she has a really good feeling about her work on the community service project.

Maevis's mother claims that she is elated by her daughter's overall improvement in both her apparent happiness and willingness to cooperate—and she thinks that Vision Seekers has played an important role in that improvement. Other factors include the support her extended family has given her, as well as her own attempts to "hang in there" with Maevis.

Allan Brant

Our final vignette describes Allan, a fourteen year old Mohawk with a longstanding reputation as a "tough kid," who was "headed for jail and nothing but trouble." While a bright boy of superior, measured intelligence, Allan had failed to pass into high school from Grade 8 twice, primarily because he had been expelled from school for fighting and truancy. He had also been charged with vandalism twice under the Young Offender's Act and in the previous two years he had twice been placed in a custodial institution for youth for several months.

When the Vision Seekers Committee in a town near his home reserve considered him for the program, they initially concluded that he was already "too far gone" to be helped by Vision Seekers and that he would be too disruptive, perhaps requiring so much attention that the program staff would not have time to pay attention to other activities and programs. After all, Vision Seekers is about intervening with kids at high risk of establishing *patterns* of self-destructive or antisocial behaviour that last into adulthood, sometimes throughout the balance of their often short lives. The key to selection was getting kids *before* these behaviours became fixed as patterns, firmly established as reflexive coping methods of the personality structure.

Allan lived alone with his father and older brother. His father had never married and his mother had been killed after a vicious stabbing in a barroom brawl. While Allan's mother had a severe dependency on both alcohol and drugs, his father shed his own alcohol problem three years before and was an abstainer. Allan's father had for many years been one of the "tough guys" in the town where they lived near the reserve of their First Nation, getting into and winning fights both off the reserve and on. After he almost beat a friend to death (he was never formally charged for lack of evidence), Allan's father participated voluntarily in an alcohol treatment program. He moved back to the reserve because a house was made available to him and Allan.

Although he left the program before the treatment had run its scheduled course, Allan's father never drank again but his persistent anger, rooted in a childhood of abuse at the hands of his own father, never left him. Allan once told an alcohol counsellor that his father's anger haunted his every waking hour and seemed to even invade his dreams. Working seasonally in construction, Mr. Brant's attitude to people hardened rather than softened after he brought his alcohol problem under control. He was very judgmental, even contemptuous of the people on the reserve who relied on social assistance rather than working, and he encouraged disrespect in his son for reserve people and the way of life that characterized the community.

Allan's father was also very harsh in his treatment of Allan. Rather than teaching him a variety of life skills, he attempted to simply toughen him up both in attitude and in fighting skills. When he would get into serious trouble, his father would never listen to his excuses and he would never threaten him. He would simply beat him: with a stick; with the back of his hand or sometimes with a wire cord. Eventually, after teachers became aware of abnormal bruising and scarring on Allan that indicated the profile of the battered child syndrome and their concerns were supported by reports from a public health nurse, Band officials contacted the

Indian Child and Family Services Agency (ICFS) and, at eleven years old, Allan was placed in care. Rather than triggering the rage anticipated by the ICFS workers and the Community Health Nurse, Allan's father broke down and admitted that he was utterly frustrated as a father and extremely confused, even about his most basic values. He had been negative about his own people and his own traditional culture and he was feeling guilty about those feelings. The father admitted to having second thoughts about his "tough guy" image and feeling that, in masking his more tender feelings, he was perhaps demonstrating more a sense of fear than a sense of courage. He also admitted that he simply didn't know how to be a father. He explained that his own father, who had been clinically diagnosed as a manic depressive, hadn't been able to provide a role model to aspire to because he himself had suffered enormously as a child.

Allan's father described his own experience of residential school as that of an outsider. Most of the kids in the school he attended were from a neighbouring cultural group. His own most influential friend had been a boy three years older than him who had protected him from bullies at the school and taught him how to fight.

The apprehension of Allan by child welfare workers and the child custody and family circle hearing resulted in Allan's father experiencing an emotional breakdown and severe bout of depression for which he began to see an Elder and a Counsellor, as well as participating in a series of Healing Circles and counselling sessions. The former tough guy persona crumbled and he became an overly apologetic, insecure, indecisive and morose man. His violent posture became inverted; if anything, he became utterly apophysical, non-violent and even nervous when confronted with the rough play of small children.

The ICFS Agency supervisor established a family preservation plan, with visitations between Allan and his father. Meanwhile, Allan was staying with a relative on the reserve, and his negative attitude to others seemed to have crystallized. He was having a great deal of difficulty dealing with his father in his new guise as a seemingly weak man not in control. Neither could he forget the physical abuse and fear that he had experienced so recently and frequently at his hands nor reconcile those memories with his formerly intimidating father's current image as a weak and non-violent man. Allan was extremely cynical about the Healing Circles and joint counselling sessions, but he was afraid to directly express these feelings in his father's presence because he still feared him. At school, Allan's teachers were almost ready to give up on him at the time that one of the Vision Seekers' Mentors mentioned the possibility of Allan's possible involvement in the Vision Seekers program.

After numerous attempts at encouragement to join the program, Allan agreed to participate in an interview with the Program Coordinator. He liked the man who ran the program and so Allan decided to go through the screening process. While there was some reluctance to accept him into the program because of a concern about his disruptive impact on the interpersonal dynamics of the group, he was finally accepted in as a full participant.

At first, Allan stood back, adopting a kind of sneering attitude to the other participants. Gradually, with the encouragement of his peers and the staff, he became an active and enthusiastic participant in the group games and sports and he opened up and, at times, even

became quite talkative in the group sessions. After several months, the program became the most important part of his weekdays.

Allan has been placed in an excellent foster care home on the reserve and he has gradually been able to express his appreciation to his foster parents for the help he has been getting from them.

Allan has been getting help with his math at school from a tutor arranged by his Mentor. The hobby he has been getting help with is coaching, which he really loves, and in the winter of his first year in the program, he is acting as assistant coach with the "Gaffers" a hockey team for 6-8 year olds on the reserve.

With the assistance of the Counsellor attached to the program and his child welfare worker, Allan has been having weekly sessions with his father and the two are working hard towards the type of resolution to their relationship difficulties that would allow them to be reunited. Both are looking forward to the Vision Seekers camp experience, where Allan's father will serve as a volunteer assistant (In recent months, his has been recovering much of his former self-confidence).

To date, Allan's school work has not improved dramatically but he enjoys his time at school more and his grades are now starting to pick up from the slump they experienced around the time his father became so dramatically abusive.

6.0 PREPARING AND MOBILIZING THE COMMUNITY

While several kinds of communities may choose to utilize the *Vision Seekers* program, it was largely conceived in anticipation of a Canadian First Nations' reserve community and similar Northern Metis and Inuit communities—communities comprised of populations with an aboriginal majority and which exist as geographically encompassing political and administrative units. The program would also readily fit the realities of reservation communities in the United States.

The greatest secondary demand for such programming is expected to be in the core areas of urban centres where urban migrant populations of first peoples have concentrated. In such urban core areas, the most suitable type of organizational context for situating the program would be an inner-city school or parks and recreation district in an area in which Native North American people are concentrated.

It should be noted that other writers in the secondary intervention field have made the point that, the smaller and more clearly defined the community, the more effectively such programs can be operated. To their sensible advice the proviso must be added that the community should be large enough to have the "critical mass" of resources required to implement the program (See Hawkins *et al*, 1992:26). There is wisdom in both of these observations. Larger and more geographically dispersed and/or culturally and socially heterogeneous populations tend to be more difficult to mobilize. Further, the required levels of generalized community support are harder to promote and sustain. In aboriginal communities, *the key is to have competent human resources to implement the program and strong, collateral support in the community from local leaders and other education and human service workers.*

If appropriate human resources and community support are not available to operate the program, it will be doomed from the outset and should not be attempted. There are simply too many instances in which good program concepts go awry because politically biased hiring results in the recruitment of individuals entirely lacking the motivation, ability, training or emotional readiness to do the job adequately. Responsible initiators must gauge the situation to determine if the program can be mounted with a realistic chance of success. While it may not dissolve, the *Vision Seekers* program lacking capable staff and a complement of collateral support personnel, including counsellors and mentors, will suffer from mediocrity and youth participation will dwindle or be subject to constant turnover.

In the absence of leadership support, participation levels may be too low and the commitment to ensure program quality may be overtaken by such concerns as political or familial hiring preferences. The extremely challenging nature of secondary intervention programming tends to mean that to provide mediocre programming is tantamount to failure. It is surely better to divert precious financial and human resources to other community activities with some assurance of success than to commit funding to support a predictably ill-managed program. After all, a poorly administered program will have little if any impact on the lives of participants or their families. Further, a program failure can reinforce local skepticism, inadvertently serving to discourage an attempt to try again or to explore other, similar social intervention programs.

A Three-Stage Process

The *Vision Seekers* community preparation and mobilization process can reasonably be ordered as a three-stage process. First, if possible, there should be a 3-4 month long period of community preparation, in which an initial steering committee is formed and the leadership, key stakeholders and ancillary service providers have the program explained to them. Hopefully, this explanatory process will result in their enthusiastic support.

Second, there should be a 3-6 month program planning process, in which an oversight committee or board is formally established (it could be the original steering committee), an administrative system and supervisory structure is worked out and staff and support personnel, such as the Counsellor and the Mentors are recruited, oriented, and, if necessary, exposed to training and/or have a training plan established that they will be expected to pursue as part of their preparatory work requirements.

The third stage of preparation and community mobilization will be described in detail in the subsequent chapter, in which the first cycle of selection and recruitment of high social risk pre- and early adolescent children and their families and school mentors is explained.

The balance of this chapter is directly addressed to potential and actual organizers of a *Vision Seekers* program in one or more communities.

6.1 THE THREE TO FOUR MONTH COMMUNITY PREPARATION PROCESS

During the first four months of program preparation, you, the initiators of the program or initiating group should spend all the time necessary to secure the support of formal and informal leadership. While the approach taken in each community will vary, the steps described below should probably constitute the elements and suggest a plausible sequence for the undertaking.

Step 1 - Initiator(s)' Self-Education:

The first step of the initiator or initiating group should be to develop a clear understanding of the nature of the *Vision Seekers* strategy. A good understanding can basically be determined by answering the newspaper story's "5-W & 1H" questions:

- *Who* is the program intended to serve?
- *What* is the program intended to do for those it is intended to serve (directly and indirectly)?
- *Why* can it be anticipated that such a program should achieve its intended goals?
- *When* would the program operate (including pre-planning, starting-date, hours operating, etc.)?

- *Where* would it operate (facility[s]) needs, camp arrangements, schools involved, board meetings, etc.)?

In order to come up with a reasonable overview of how the program could work in their community, you are advised to become well acquainted with the contents of this book. Further, the members of your core group should meet a few times and carefully review the contents of the book. Everyone should read the initial chapters that describe the rationale for the program and one person should give a formal presentation. An understanding of the rationale gets everyone "on side" and "on the same page," so to speak, and encourages a group commitment to the program. Most time should be spent on those parts which address the actual practical details of the program. The primary focus should be on considering how you will adapt and implement the program in a way that would meet local needs and come to terms with local realities.

Knowing both *why* the program is important and *how* the program works is important for the entire initiating group, and an attempt should be made to anticipate and have answers for questions that are likely to be asked by community members. The core group should become ambassadors for the program in the community, describing, explaining and encouraging support for it every chance they get, either individually or as a group.

If one person stands out as a gifted communicator, then that person might serve as a spokesperson when questions are asked in a formal context, such as at an education board meeting, a band council meeting or an interview by a television or newspaper reporter. Special attention should be paid to any "tough questions" that may come up, the ones most difficult to answer. By having concise but thoughtful answers you are signalling that you not only have confidence in yourselves but in the program. Optimism, after all, tends to attract support.

Organizers should also do a little extra work to find out if there are other programs or aspects of programming that could better serve the community's needs or might actually be integrated appropriately into the a local adaptation of Vision Seekers. Improvements to meet local circumstances can be made by integrating local ideas into the program. This not only improves the effectiveness of the program, it also gives a better "feel" to it, and inspires a stronger sense of local ownership. To borrow a metaphor from film, ultimately, the words on these pages are a simply a raw script. Ultimately, it is the producers, the directors and assistant directors, and the actors (participants) themselves who make the movie come to life and who therefore really own its authorship—and legitimately gain most of the credit for its success!

Step 2 - Securing Support from Community Leadership:

After acquiring a clear and easily communicated overview of the purpose and details of the *Vision Seekers* strategy and its basic rationale, it is time to involve and secure the support of key community leaders and individuals who may have a special interest in such a program.

The latter people we refer to as community *stakeholders*.

So who are the stakeholders that should be contacted?

In a reserve community, to begin the idea promotion process, contact should be made with the Chief and Council and appropriate boards or committees that might have a direct or indirect mandate for promoting or operating this kind of program, such as the Health Committee, an Education Authority, or a Recreation Board. The idea should also be shared with addictions intervention staff, such as community alcohol and drug abuse prevention workers (who generally work with the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program [NNADAP]) and mental health workers, both to observe basic courtesies regarding existing mandates and to secure their input and general support.

The Chief and Council (or the most senior community leaders in situations in which band councils are not in operation) should probably be informed of the idea through an initial contact with the Chief and then a formal presentation to Council. The sequence through which the program concept is spread should be determined by local sensibilities.

If a health committee or education authority would be offended by not being the first to be informed of the idea and the Band Council is not quite so sensitive, then set your communication sequence accordingly. If he or she is able, approachable and helpful, the Band Manager will probably be able to inform program initiators of the protocol appropriate to these matters. Normally, it would be appropriate to contact Chief and Council as soon as it appears the idea might have some potential in your community. However, if local norms suggest that seeing the Chief and Council as your first move is considered "end-running" by committees mandated to advise Council (or make ultimate decisions) on such matters, then bypassing them to go directly to Chief and Council is simply poor public relations—and, unfortunately, it is far too often such "little things" that are overlooked that lead to the stillbirth of good program ideas. As the phrase suggests, "The Devil is in the details."

If it is a local custom or norm for new program organizers to talk the idea over with the Elders first, or with health and social development staff or the Education Director before going to Council, then you should probably act accordingly, even if you think the existing patterns are unimportant. Don't begin by bucking local expectations and ignoring the egos of local personalities! Such a careless stance is almost guaranteed to backfire when those who are feeling bypassed get a chance to wreak their vengeance. Essentially, you should seek the widest and deepest possible support in the community.

In an urban, inner-city community, a community council or home and school association would probably be the most appropriate bodies to approach. Sometimes there are also special organizations established to deal with inner-city youth problems and, typically, the knowledge, freshness, commitment, energy and creativity the members of such organizations bring to their work can prove an invaluable asset. They are needed on your side!

Organizers should also be sure that they are not intruding on other people's "territory." Usurping the functions of others is a sure-fire way to create human obstacles to the success of your project. Besides, it simply doesn't make sense to duplicate services when you could

work together and coordinate your activities. In some situations, a recreation board might be the most appropriate organization from which to secure initial support, in others it might be a child welfare committee—or it might make sense to operate as a sub-committee under the umbrella of such an existing organization. Obviously, this could be an easy way to secure instant legitimacy and community support.

The initiators will probably find that it is not hard to determine who should be targeted for initial support. In all cases, your organization might develop a loose or even very formal affiliation with a community organization which is in possession of at least some resources and established community recognition and support.

Informal networking is also important. A list of key, influential community members with a direct or indirect interest in this type of program should be drawn up and all of them should be contacted and given encouragement to lend their tacit or explicit support—or their silence if they are not particularly interested (In other words, you want to make sure they won't overtly or covertly throw roadblock in the way of the project's development). Essentially, the personal belief in and commitment to the value of the Vision Seekers' program held by organizers should be at the forefront of their "pitch." Passionate commitment, if sincere, will at least garner the respect of even the most contrite of key community influentials, if not their overwhelming support.

Step 3: Securing the Support of Potential Resource Persons and Participating Professionals

When seeking the support of service professionals with agency or program mandates that overlap with the mandate of Vision Seekers, it is important that organizers know their program and its rationale when contact is made. To gather ideas about program management and, simultaneously, to encourage their support, organizers should ask local service professionals for their insights into what will make the program work and what they think might undermine its success. Efforts such as these show that program promoters respect the knowledge and advice of these people and that program organizers cannot be dismissed as disrespectful "know-it-alls" or "upstarts" who have failed to appreciate the hard work and initiatives taken by others. Striking a professional relationship like this also serves to allay most of the fears of other human serviced workers and it answers any criticisms about individuals or the proposed program that might have preceded contact with program organizers.

Bad messages about the program or about the personal motivations of organizers can be the death knell of community support for the program (i.e., the notion that organizers have ulterior motives of some kind or that you are trying to displace their program). The "moccasin telegraph" is an ancient and forceful technology that needs to be respected. No matter how annoying its constant presence can be, you ignore it at your peril!

Promotion of the idea among those who must be relied upon for direct support to make the program operate is essential.

Such *Ancillary Support Personnel* include the following:

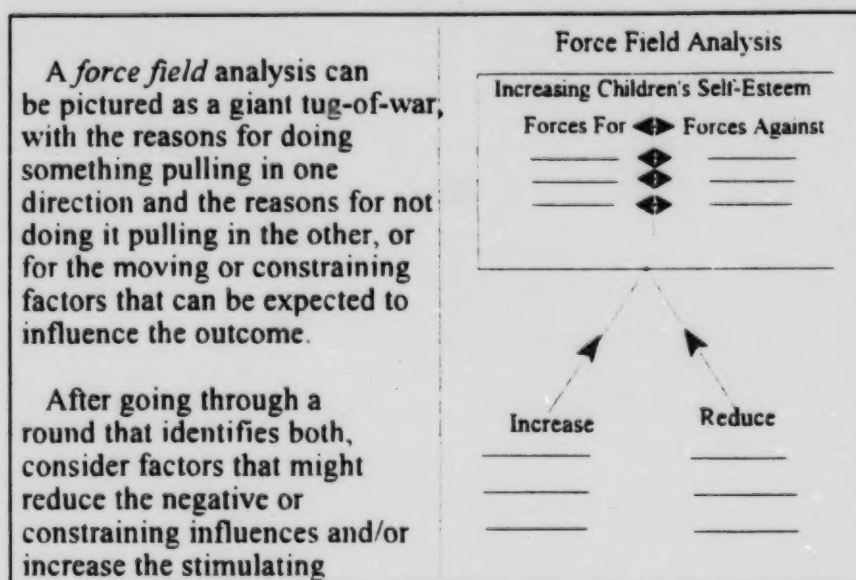
- Elders
- On reserves, school bus drivers or a specially designated drivers who will be bringing the participants to and/or from the program during the school week.
- Mental health workers/counsellors who would participate in the program.
- School Principals and other affected school officials.
- Teachers willing to serve as Mentors;
- Guest instructors or speakers who might be asked to participate.
- Potential volunteers.

If support is obviously not forthcoming from most of these key people, it may be time to reassess whether or not the community is truly ready for such a program. Because the effort will require a lot of hard work and a complex and often delicate set of interpersonal tasks, you should be realistic about assessing the actual level of support that does exist in a community—and willing to accept the possibility that the idea is untimely. Open hostility from the community, resistance or even indifference rather than support from the leadership, or reluctance or resistance from potential support personnel are all signs that program initiators must rethink their approach to promoting the idea or perhaps even laying the idea to rest until there are signs indicating that the time is ripe for proceeding.

One simple method for approaching the question of whether or not a good "Plan B" is feasible is described as *force field analysis*, which is a perhaps "too fancy" name for a way of looking at the pros and cons, the barriers and facilitators to proceeding with a plan of action of any kind.

The concept of *force-field analysis* was first presented formally by the social-psychologist Kurt Lewin in the early 1950s. Lewin observed that a number of contending forces always operate in a community organization's current field of action. Some of these forces act as resistors to goal achievement. Others drive an individual or a group toward its goal or make it easier to get there. A state of tension exists, producing a dynamic force field in which the balance shifts towards and away from the possibility of a goal being achieved. Using this method of viewing the current situation can help the group determine which forces they can mobilize and which forces they must resist or avoid.

Figure 1: Graphic Depiction of the Process of Force-field Analysis



To get a "snapshot" of the force field, brainstorm all the forces now present that may hinder or help your success. These forces may be intangible items like apathy or indifference or personal networks likely to be opposed to the concept; they may also be tangible, like people or meeting rooms or funds.

Some advice: First, list all those things that may be obstacles to the achievement of your goals. Remember, you are listing currently operating forces, not those that may materialize in the future. Some common restraining factors include factionalism in the Band membership that ensures that, if one group proposes an idea the other group (or groups), which is persistently suspicious and hostile to the group proposing the *Vision Seekers* program, is sure to oppose it; it could also be policies and procedures in the Band administration that act as inhibitors, or it could be lack of money. There are many more possible obstacles of course, but this should give you an idea of the type of resistant factors to consider. Generating this list will give you a good idea of the kinds of obstacles you will face.

Unfortunately, many groups think only of the obstacles they must face or the difficulties they will encounter, failing to give equal consideration to all the forces that operate to the benefit of their project's success. This leads to self-defeating thought patterns and, ultimately, to early project abandonment. By examining your helping forces after you have considered your hindering forces, you inspire confidence and give momentum for your purpose. Inadvertently, you have also begun the work of targeting activities that must be undertaken to achieve your goals.

Force field analysis holds that driving and restraining forces are likely to be in relative balance and it is your job to consider whether or not, you can neutralize, diminish the force, or avoid the resistors through strategic planning, and enhance your advantages, thus tipping the balance towards positive forces.

In less than an hour, using *force field analysis* as a group exercise, you can discover a great deal about your situation in less than an hour.

Some Keys to Effective Force-Field Analysis

In a people-centred program, people are obviously the most significant consideration in anticipating the constraints and opportunities for proceeding with the Vision Seekers program. Organizers should therefore make sure that, as the most fundamental element of force-field analysis, they should identify their potential stakeholders and examine the positive and negative forces they can be expected to bring to bear on the development and implementation of the program.

Stakeholders: Investors and Resistors

Two human relations writers, Mason and Mitroff (1985) have identified stakeholders as people with purposes and strategies which can either support or resist your efforts. Those who are expected to support program goals might be called *investors* because, by supporting the program, they will probably gain in some way or at least clearly see that the target group or the community as a whole will gain. The *resistors* are those who are nons-supporting or who will actually or potentially oppose your proposed project.

The initiating group should take the time to think beyond not only the most obvious resistors or investors to all of those less obvious people who might gain or lose from the project. They can only be ignored at some peril to the program. The following individuals should be considered (as well as many more):

- a Chief or a Portfolio Councillor who might desperately need some new project activity as s/he faces an election; such a leader may be especially supportive;
- an individual who sees him/herself to be persecuted, always left out of Band affairs, and who sees the proposal sponsor as part of the "in-group" on the Reserve; such a person is likely to be very negative and likely to undermine the group unless their thinking is converted to a "neutral" or supportive status;
- a Recreation worker or NNADAP Youth Worker who feels that, if s/he did not sponsor the project, s/he will look bad if it succeeds (i.e., It will look like someone else is actually doing the job for which he or she is paid, thus encouraging criticism of his or her performance);
- a local RCMP constable or staff sergeant who is very cynical about the type of children

who will be in the program and whose negative attitude will cast a shadow on the undertaking.

In short, those individuals should be considered who have some stake in the project's success, for this is the group from whom you are most likely to find the most sincere and whole-hearted support. Get them involved in at least some small way if possible. Tap the energy that lies dormant behind that supportive attitude. Also think about those who are in some way threatened by the project's success. They should be converted from resisters to investors or at least talked into indifference. If possible, involve the resisters in planning and give them some responsibilities that will encourage them to secure at least a small stake in the success of the project and will divert them from undermining words or actions, even if their help is relatively meagre.

Identify Resource Needs and Analyse Your Capacity to Meet Them

Like all programs, *Vision Seekers* requires resources to operate: It requires funding to pay its staff; facilities to house the program; people to act as Mentors; guest facilitators, speakers and instructors; transportation to bring the kids to the after-school facility; and equipment and supplies to use in programs. The question is *How does your Board secure sufficient resources to support the operation of the Vision Seekers' program?*

Now that you have a good sense of your level of support amongst stakeholders and whether or not you can tip the balance of forces in the community in favour of *Vision Seekers*, it is time to examine the resources, both cash and kind, that you will allow you to proceed with the program.

Decide which obstacle you want to overcome first. Look over your list of helping forces or resources and decide which of these can be used to counteract whatever is working against you. A list of key questions are stated below. Generally, pick assets that are easiest to use, although other criteria such as developing broader participation should also be considered and keeping yourself from becoming too predictable should be considered.

Step 4: Establishing a Board

After it is clear that sufficient support from key leaders and stakeholders has been secured to proceed with the program, the next step should be to establish a community board or committee to establish policies and procedures, to recruit staff and to oversee the program in an ongoing way.

Certain criteria should be considered in establishing a Board:

1. There should be a respected Elder who is invited to sit on the Board. If it is possible, an Elder with some specific appreciation of program development and administrative processes should be chosen. A former Chief, Councillor or Band Manager who is regarded as an Elder might make an excellent choice. Participation by this individual

should be requested during a special visit during which a gift of tobacco and some other expression of appreciation is left behind for the pleasure of the Elder.

Exhibit 1: QUESTIONS TO ASK IN ANALYSING YOUR RESOURCE CAPACITY

1. How much money will the entire program cost if you had to pay cash for it (Prepare a detailed budget to answer this question)?
2. Could the school [if you have one] rearrange its teaching assignments to make the program possible?
3. If you Band is very small, would be possible to organize the program in conjunction with nearby reserve communities?
4. Are there any monies currently at the disposal of the First Nation or Community Organization that can pay all or part of the budget?(e.g., Federal programs through INAC or Health Canada).
5. What are the in-kind resources that might be substituted for specific budget items (e.g., Bus drivers bringing children to the after-school program site; volunteer drivers taking children to the camp program; school gym being made available free of charge; freeing up a teacher's aide position (or two) to staff the program?

2. An individual with some clear proximity to the "power centre" of Reserve or community leadership should be recruited to the Board. On a Reserve, the Chief, the Health Portfolio Councillor, or a former Chief or individual with special influence and respect in the community. In a school-based urban program, the head of an organization such as a community school association might be useful.
3. On a reserve in which there is a comprehensive school or an off-reserve school in which most of the participants from the Reserve will be in attendance, a Director of Education or School Principal or his/her designate might be invited to sit on the Board. This will serve not only as a source of expertise of value to the program but it will establish an important liaison between the program and the school personnel that will be serving as in-school mentors to each participant.
4. An individual with expertise in mental health or social work will be of considerable value as a Board member. A mental health therapist working for the Reserve or a trained social worker working in a Child and Family Services Agency are obvious examples. In an off-reserve situation, individuals with similar backgrounds are also obvious choices.
5. An individual with some experience and special knowledge of organized recreation could also be of considerable value to the Board.
6. It can be useful to have a member of the local police service involved, whether that is Reserve Police, the RCMP, City Police, the Ontario Provincial Police or the Quebec Provincial Police, or, in the United States, a Tribal Police force officer on a Reservation or a respected policeman of Indian ancestry in an urban setting.

7. Last but certainly not least is an individual with special knowledge of the outdoor environment and outdoor living and survival techniques.

Obviously, you may not get people who fill all of these criteria. What is important is to get people who have an obvious contribution to make to the program. It is also important to attempt to get people who are "doers," as well as some who are "thinkers," which means that you need people to lead and propel the entire process but you also need those who can anticipate the most effective and least effective ways to develop and implement the program.

It is also important that the Board *not* be too large, with a size of five to seven probably being ideal. Getting much smaller limits the "critical mass" of wisdom that is possible by having a mix of expertise and distinctive personalities that seems to have a lower limit of size. Getting larger seems to reduce the participation of the majority and, quite frankly, the Board then has a problem carrying a lot of "deadwood" (non-participating) board members—as well as having to contend with the inevitable morale problems amongst the more pro-active members and jealousy or envy amongst the shier, quieter members. *And it is very important that all Board members actively participate!* Practically speaking, if there are board expenses and funding, too large a board tends to eliminate too much of the money that might otherwise be available for program operations.

If honorariums and meeting expenses can be avoided, don't offer them. Experience suggests that a truly voluntary program secures better motivated, more committed, and more capable people to the Board. Unfortunately, paying volunteers to fulfill a community need tends to be a corrupting process and does little to encourage Board member participation or homework.

The Type of Board Members You Might Want to Avoid

Despite the fact that many of us dislike meetings and many of us simply have to attend too many meetings, getting our overseers together as a group is often essential to the development and implementation of the affairs of any project, program or organization. It is therefore essential that the types of people that we involve in our meetings make constructive contributions to the process. After all, who's got time to *waste*? If you either know in advance that certain people are unlikely to be constructive and likely to obstruct the meeting process, then avoid them in your board selection process. If you find out that, in the conduct of meetings, one or more individuals reveal a persistent pattern of obstruction, then you might either consider replacing them or you might adopt certain techniques to neutralize their negative influence.

The obstructive roles identified in Exhibit 2 below are some of the frequent types of obstructionists who get in the way of healthy board functioning.

Some of the methods that can be used to neutralize the effects of negative participants are included under the section below on Board Development.

6.2 ACTION PLANNING FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The next stage of program development involves what we refer to as *action planning*, which is essentially the process by which specific actions that will be required to achieve your program development goals are identified and placed on a time line. An action plan is a work plan broken down into specific units of required activities. It also involves the assignment of start and completion dates and it specifies of who is responsible for carrying out each activity and who and what process will be used to see that all the work gets done.

There is no point in belabouring the details of action planning. There are some basic steps that must be taken to get it moving, however, and they are worth mentioning.

Exhibit 2**ROLE PLAYERS TO AVOID IN SELECTING
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS*****The 'Dominator'***

This is a basically constructive group member who overdoes it. S/he suppresses the participation of others by contributing disproportionately to the flow of the discussion.

The 'Fawner'

This is basically a devout loyalist of either the Dominator, the Project Manager or Board Committee Chairperson or any other charismatic or forceful personality in the group or workplace. Sometimes humorously referred to as someone's 'groupie', this type of individual acts to reinforce the destructive behaviour of the Dominator or to incense other group members who feel that, whenever they relate to a particular individual (say the Project Manager), they are actually having to deal with two people.

The 'Imposer'

The Imposer is a "This is the way it's gotta be done!" kind of team participant. Sometimes this role is played with a personality that needs to impose to achieve psychological comfort. He or she is strong willed and single-minded and tends to introduce ideas or opinions with a tone that suggests arrogance. Other times, the role is played by someone who is participating because they are advancing a specific agenda that may be too narrow for the decision-making mandate as a whole.

The Blocker

This role is performed by people who continue the argument/discussion for longer than virtually everyone else is prepared to tolerate. The Blocker creates a communication logjam and his behaviour makes for inefficient meetings. One variant of the Blocker is the 'Frustrated Philosopher' — i.e., a 'wannabe' philosopher — who intellectualizes all questions rather than getting down to practical matters. This person is the type of individual who seems to participate out of a frustrated need to express or share ideas.

The Attacker

This is a role played by the person who challenges group cohesion by constantly challenging ideas in ways that block the efficient flow of business, whether in a meeting or through other more informal communication processes. People assuming this role also create a social atmosphere in which the rest of the group, particularly the less secure or shy ones, are unwilling to express themselves. At its worst, the people who play this type of role target their attacks against the character or intelligence of other group members. Ridicule, scorn and contempt are typically part of the Attacker's repertoire.

6.2.1 - CONDUCTING AN ACTION PLANNING WORKSHOP

Step 1: Assign a Facilitator

The important thing to do is to identify an action planning facilitator who, in turn, will bring together the program board, any willing volunteers, and all those staff who can be briefly seconded to work on the project during its developmental stages. It is important that the facilitator have good workshop facilitation and project coordination skills, is fully aware of the project and that s/he has a demonstrable interest in its success.

Ideally, a board member, especially the board chairperson, should take the facilitator function on. Often, however, board members lack the confidence to take such functions on. In that case, a teacher, school official, or health or social development worker would surely fit the bill but, if no such person is obviously interested, an individual who facilitates workshops as a specialized activity might be called upon *if* financial resources are available. Sometimes a local minister or retired social services staff person who lives in a nearby town or, if it is an urban setting, in the community, is willing to do some of this initial facilitating work. In the long run, however, it is important to empower the board and, if no individual board member is willing to facilitate, the learning of group facilitation skills should be a prime board member development goal.

Step 2: Hold a Workshop

The next step in the process is for the facilitator to hold a planning workshop that results in the completion of the action plan. Obviously, the entire board should be present, so it is important to make sure that the workshop is planned in accordance with everyone's schedules. While the planning may well take a full day, to accommodate the agendas of board members, two or three evenings may have to be set aside.

Workshop Rules

The planning workshop is critical because it sets the tone for the future conduct of the business of making policy and overseeing Vision Seekers operations. The meeting *is* a workshop rather than a formal business meeting, however, so a fairly informal meeting process will be expected. In respect of First Nations' tradition and in keeping with the spirit of a workshop, every effort should be made to use *consensus* decision-making. But you don't want the workshop to be too informal, to descend into lengthy chat, because you want to get things done with a degree of efficiency—and, in this way, wet the tone for future meetings.

To divorce meetings from the formal rules of a business meeting (i.e., of parliamentary procedure) is to invite a number of problems, however. Fortunately, these problems can be prevented or overcome.

The problems that are most typical include the following:

- ▶ dominance by some individuals: the meeting seems to be overwhelmed overtly or manipulated covertly by specific individuals; others see the process as simply an attempt

to get the less dominant members of the group to be a "rubber stamp" for their ideas;

- ▶ people not listening to or understanding what others are saying, or making faulty assumptions;
- ▶ personality conflicts—encouraged by a lack of openness and trust, underlying tension, racism, sexism, status differences;
- ▶ too many *hidden agendas* that are motivating group members in their discussion rather than there being simply a straightforward and open discussion of the meeting's formal agenda items;
- ▶ the group members seem to be avoiding problems, instead adopting a "group denial" stance in which "Everything is fine!" or "No problems around here!", despite some fairly significant evidence to the contrary;
- ▶ an attitude of pessimism pervades the group, with members believing that there is nothing the group can do to change the situation that the group has come together to challenge;
- ▶ people having difficulty getting into the flow of conversation and getting a chance to participate;
- ▶ people attacking individuals (personalizing) rather than dealing with their ideas;
- ▶ a loss of focus on items of business;
- ▶ the purpose of the discussion is confused between *process* (how to discuss a topic) and *content* (what to discuss);
- ▶ people go over the same ideas over and over again;
- ▶ information overload—group members have to hold on to too many ideas at any given time;
- ▶ the purpose of the meeting is unclear: the objectives and expectations of the meeting are not understood;
- ▶ ineffective management of time.

In order to surmount these many problems, the board or committee designate specific people to play certain roles. These are...

- the facilitator
- the recorder
- the group member
- the chairperson

THE FACILITATOR

The *Facilitator's* role is to act as a servant to the group—a servant who does not evaluate or contribute ideas. His/her responsibility is, rather,

- a. to help the group focus its energies on a task by suggesting methods and procedures;
- b. to protect all members of the group from attack;
- c. to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate;
- d. to conduct all pre-meeting planning and post-meeting arrangements;

THE RECORDER

The *Recorder's* role is to serve as a neutral, non-evaluating servant of the group. The responsibility of the recorder is to write down basic ideas on large sheets of paper in front of the participants. The objective is not to record everything that is said but to capture enough so that ideas can be preserved and recalled at any time. In this way, the act of recording does not significantly slow down the progress of the meeting. The record itself is called the *group memory* and serves as an accepted record of what is happening as it is happening.

THE GROUP MEMBER

The *group member* him or herself is at the centre of the meeting; s/he is the truly active participant in the meeting. It is the responsibility of the group member to keep the facilitator and recorder in their neutral roles and to make sure that ideas are recorded accurately. In general, the group member devotes his or her total energies to the item of business being discussed.

THE CHAIRPERSON

Under the ground rules of this method, the chairperson does not run the meeting but becomes and active participant, freed from the role of coordinating the flow of meeting business. Otherwise, the chairperson retains all powers and responsibilities. The Chairperson has the power to set constraints and regain control of the meeting if s/he is not satisfied by the progress of the discussion. S/he also sets the agenda; argues actively for her or his points of view; urges group members to accept tasks and deadlines; and represents the group in meetings with other groups.

Facilitating a meeting

In the approach we are suggesting, the facilitator plays the key role in guiding the course of the meeting. Here's some hints on facilitating a good meeting:

1. At the beginning of the meeting, you (the facilitator) should explicitly describe how the meeting will proceed, and explicitly define members' roles and responsibilities.
2. Agree, at the outset, to remain neutral and not to evaluate or contribute your own ideas. Request other members.
3. Ask the committee member to:
 - a) agree to an agenda
 - b) agree to a method of proceeding, giving emphasis to the decision-making process and assignment of responsibilities for taking action on group decision.
4. Ask for a review of any information and past discussions relevant to each item as you proceed with each.
5. Ask anyone directly responsible for carrying out previously assigned tasks to report; e.g., actions taken, progress on information gathering or other inquiries, etc.
6. When the group becomes silent, wait a couple of minutes, then encourage more contribution. For example, say, "Hey, is everyone asleep or are you thinking?" If nobody responds, you might say, "I need some help. What do you think we should do next?" Don't start suggesting possibilities for a minute or two, but then, if there is still silence, you might say, "What do you think"? Maybe we should move on the next item?" By this time, most "frozen" meetings become unfrozen. If not, it is time to get a little more forceful. Say, for example, "Look? This is your meeting. It's not my job to control it, but I seem to be the only one who's alive right now. Since there's no strong feeling, maybe we could..." The important point is to avoid controlling the meeting as far as possible, but don't let it flounder.
7. By consent of the group, a facilitator is empowered to act as a good police officer. Positively encourage all people to speak their piece, making sure that no one or two people dominate. Say such things as "Good idea! We're really moving along, really getting to work together now. Let's keep it up. Make sure you protect people from personal attack. Say, for example, if people seem to be "dumping" on or "ganging up" on an individual, "Okay, let's think positively about what John is suggesting. Maybe that way we could get a better appreciation of what he's getting at, and take something useful from his ideas, even if there is general disagreement with it.
8. Repeatedly check on the summary statements of the recorder, and paraphrase what is on the flipchart to make sure the essence of what is said is captured by him/her.
9. Do not allow consensus processes to go on for too long! If discussion does not lead to agreement and you can see that it won't, suggest a procedure for tackling the issues at another meeting or having a vote. Try to keep within the time allowed for on the agenda as much as possible.

6.2.2 - CREATING THE ACTION PLAN ITSELF

An action plan is the practical link between your statement of purpose, your goals and your management and program description and the process of implementation. In short, it reduces your goals to a set of practical procedures. An action plan should consist of a specific set of brief statements indicating how a goal is broken down into objectives and objectives into tasks, and it also states who is responsible for carrying out the task, who will supervise, and what the expected time frame is for start and finish dates.

To prepare an action plan, the following steps are recommended:

Action Planning (A-P) Step 1: Select an Action Planning Coordinator. While it should be the program coordinator or director, you may want someone else who is particularly skilled at organizing people and "coaching and cajoling" them into action. If the program is school-based, then the Vice-Principal or a skilful athletic coach might be ideal alternatives to the Program Director. The Director of your health clinic or a Community Health Nurse or therapist might also be excellent choices.

A-P Step 2: Review Program Purpose and Goals: Staff and Board (or Coordinating Committee) members should privately read over the key statements describing the program mission, vision and goals in preparation for a workshop devoted to action planning.

A-P Step 3: Set Aside at Least 8 Hours for Action Planning: If possible, schedule a mutually convenient full day (or 3 evenings) for planning.

A-P Step 4: Prepare Goal/Objective/Task Reduction Statements in Advance: In order to facilitate an efficient group planning process, the program staff should examine each goal and prepare a preliminary statement of objectives to be derived from the stated goals, and tasks derived from the objectives. While it must be expected that the group planning process will substantially alter these preliminary statements, having something to work from — to "get the ball rolling" — by having some prior work done tends to be an effective spur to efficiency.

A-P Step 5: Plan the Workshop: The Board should identify a meeting place and a Facilitator. The Facilitator should prepare an agenda and some notes, working from the preliminary objective/task statements prepared by the program staff. The Facilitator should also select a Recorder to assist with the flow of the meeting, and involve the Recorder to participate in the preparation of the meeting.

The Planning Workshop

A-P Step 6: Group Review of the Program: The Facilitator should begin the Action Planning Workshop by reviewing how the community became interested in the program, what problems originated the interest in the program, the purpose and goals of the Vision Seekers' Program and its compatibility with the purpose your own community or community group had in seeking out an intervention program for troubled teens. Each participant should be asked to share in describing the program, and if the familiarity with the program purpose and goals is not clear, then an effort should be made to ensure that by the end of the meeting, everyone has a good understanding of the purpose and basic contents of the program.

A-P Step 7: Preparing an Action Plan—Establishing Objectives: Prepare a series of objective statements that outline all the work to be done to prepare the program. Think of the process as a chronological sequence because some things must be done prior to getting on with subsequent work. For example, if you are hiring a staff person beyond the program director and you expect that person to have primary responsibility for the physical and craft education components of the program, then it obviously makes sense to hire that individual prior to attempting to develop that part of the program. The individual you hire should probably do most, if not all, of the work in planning out the program and in ordering any resources required to support the program activities.

You might write your objective statements as follows:

Objective 1: To communicate with all 22 on- and off-reserve administrators, health, social development, educational and police personnel who might have some responsibility for or interest in the program to ensure that they are fully aware of the program and its intentions.

Note: The statement begins with "To . . ." and it *quantifies* whenever possible the expectation implicit to the statement of intention.

A-P Step 8: Preparing the Action Plan—Describing Tasks to be Done: Now, beside each objective, you should summarize the specific activities required to ensure that the objective is in fact met.

For example, to use the example from the descriptor provided in the previous step, the following activity descriptors would suffice:

Supportive Activities

- a. Prepare a brief 2-page program outline for limited circulation in brochure fashion, describing the goals of the program, when it will be offered, any assistance that might be required, and the program contact numbers.
- b. Divide up the name list of key personnel to be informed.
- c. Meet with all individual personnel on the list and verbally explain the program and leave

a list with them.

A-P Step 9: Preparing the Action Plan—Assigning Tasks: The next step is to identify people to perform all the tasks required to meet the objective. Obviously, this must be done with the cooperation of the people assigned to carrying out the work. So each person that you expect to involve should be approached personally, and the task discussed and explained.

A-P Step 10: Preparing the Action Plan —Setting Time Frames: Without a clear sense of timing, the work simply will not get done. So set specific start and completion dates for each task.

A-P Step 11: Preparing the Action Plan—Monitoring Progress: Experience suggests that, unless regular progress evaluation checkpoints are utilized as a project develops, the project always has some loose ends to be tied. Someone, probably the Project Director, should monitor the entirety of the action plan—and his or her progress should in turn be monitored by the Planning Committee Chairperson. Don't see this as interference; it is a positive part of providing team support and it should be treated that way.

Exhibit 3**ACTION PLANNING GUIDE**

Sheet Number: 1 (etc.)

Objective Statement:

Key Activity	Associated Tasks	Achievement Indicator	Time Frame	Personnel Assigned

Some of the objectives you should consider including in your action planning process include the following:

Public Communication/Program Promotion

- explaining/informing the leadership of the program
- explaining/informing collateral social, health and justice colleagues
- informing the community: (a) adults (b) children (c) potential recruits (d) parents of potential recruits

Acquiring/Preparing Meeting Space

- securing space from Chief and Council (or Health or Education Authority)
- establishing terms and rules for use
- signing agreements for use
- cleaning space
- renovating (if necessary)
- establishing use areas for recreation, groups, counselling, and storage

Transportation

- arranging for bus drivers to bring children to gym
- securing back-up transportation when a child misses bus
- securing the use of a van for excursions
- determining safest and most cost-efficient means of transporting children to summer camp

Preparing Program Activity Schedules

- Preparing curriculum for group work
- Preparing recreation activity schedule

Securing Equipment and Materials

- Acquisition of office equipment
- Acquisition of office stationery
- Acquisition of chairs and table for group
- Acquisition of audio-visual equipment (slide/tape player; VCR; Camcorder; flipcharts; overhead projector)
- Acquisition of craft materials

- Acquisition of sports equipment (volleyball nets, game balls [basketballs, softballs, volleyballs, etc. depending on programming])

Reviewing Policies and Procedures

- Staff read policies and procedures prepare related policy statements to be shared in writing and on paper with children
- Work out any policy and procedural arrangements connected to external service personnel (e.g., arrangements with child welfare workers, RCMP detachment, etc.)

Prepare and Acquire Reading and Audio-visual Materials

With a view to incorporating local traditions and indigenous cultural elements in to the learning experience,

- Locate local stories and legends that fit in with the program
- Identify story-tellers who can share the stories and legends
- Identify useful reading materials that fit with various stages of the curriculum, including fiction and non-fiction
- Identify potential films, videos, slide/tape presentations that fit with some aspect of the program
- Review materials
- Purchase or book materials.

Prepare Guest Speaker's List

- Identify potential speakers/facilitators/presenters who have something significant to contribute to a particular aspect of the curriculum (e.g., a psychologist who does a self-esteem group; a First Nations' family systems facilitator; role models)
- Contact individuals to be invited and set up a schedule

Special Event Preparation

- Identify special events (e.g., Vision Seekers Treaty signing, useful excursions, etc.)
- Prepare mini-action plan to include invitations, any transportation arrangements, payment of fees, bookings, meal preparation required, arranging with meal preparation people

Summer Camp Preparation

Again, making every attempt to adopt stories, legends, sports, and crafts indigenous to the cultural area from which the participants are drawn,

- Prepare camp curriculum
- Identify sight for camp
- Arrange for use of sight
- Identify personnel requirements
- Identify basic equipment requirements for sleeping
- Identify meal requirements
- Prepare an emergency procedures plan
- Identify transportation needs
- Make transportation arrangements
- Identify insurance requirements

7.0 BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND STAFFING

The success of your Vision Seekers program will primarily depend upon the people who oversee and set its policy and the staff responsible for implementation. This chapter offers a "how to" guide to selecting an appropriate board or committee. It also suggests how a board can fairly, effectively and efficiently conduct its business. It also offers a guide to recruiting and managing personnel.

7.1 INTEGRATED BOARD TRAINING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

If the program has sufficient financial resources to pay a fee for access to actual human resources or access to trainers provided as a public service (e.g., an extension service of a university, government or a non-government organization), the coordinating committee or board might consider engaging a trainer to provide board development and policy development training. In order to maximize efficiencies and to stimulate a sense of ownership amongst the board members, the "hands on" variety of workshop is highly recommended. In such a workshop, the trainer will not simply provide a description of how boards can effectively operate and a discussion of the theory behind effective board management; s/he will also facilitate a decision-making process through which policies and working procedures are actually developed. A list of fundamental policy categories to be considered are summarized below.

7.1.1 - CATEGORIES OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO BE CONSIDERED

No matter how small your Vision Seekers program is, it is important to have a set of policies and procedures in place to guide the program. While it can take a considerable amount of work to develop such policies and procedures, there are short-cuts to establishing them. An outline of what might be considered is presented below, and you can borrow wholly or partially on this, depending on the extent to which you must (or want to) "customize" the program to meet your own local needs.

1. **The Mission Statement:** Most programs or organizations have a *mission statement*, a set of words that provides the board or oversight committee, the employees and the participants with a framework within which to apply all of the subsequent rules and procedures contained in the manual. The statement about Vision Seekers should be carefully prepared to convey what the purpose of the program is and what it is you want to convey about it. This will partially depend on local circumstances. There is much to be borrowed in some of the descriptive sections introducing the program in earlier chapters of this book (especially Chapter 4)—and, don't be shy, borrow at will! But remember, do not allow this "borrowing" to undermine your group's sense of local ownership of the program!

2. **Organizational Philosophy:** You might want to summarize the purpose of the program more succinctly by developing a statement of specific goals and objectives. It would be advisable to focus most of these goals and objectives on the anticipated outcomes of the program for the participants.
3. **Organizational Chart:** so that everyone knows where the program fits into the Band administration and how the authority lines flow within the program, it would be advisable to draw up an organizational chart.

In Figure 2 below, a "stand alone" organizational model is provided, in which the program operates semi-autonomously, with staff only reporting to a board and the board simply being selected by the Chief and Council (or band membership) and in a position to intervene if a significant conflict arises.

Figure 2: Example of 'Stand Alone' Vision Seekers Program Organization Chart

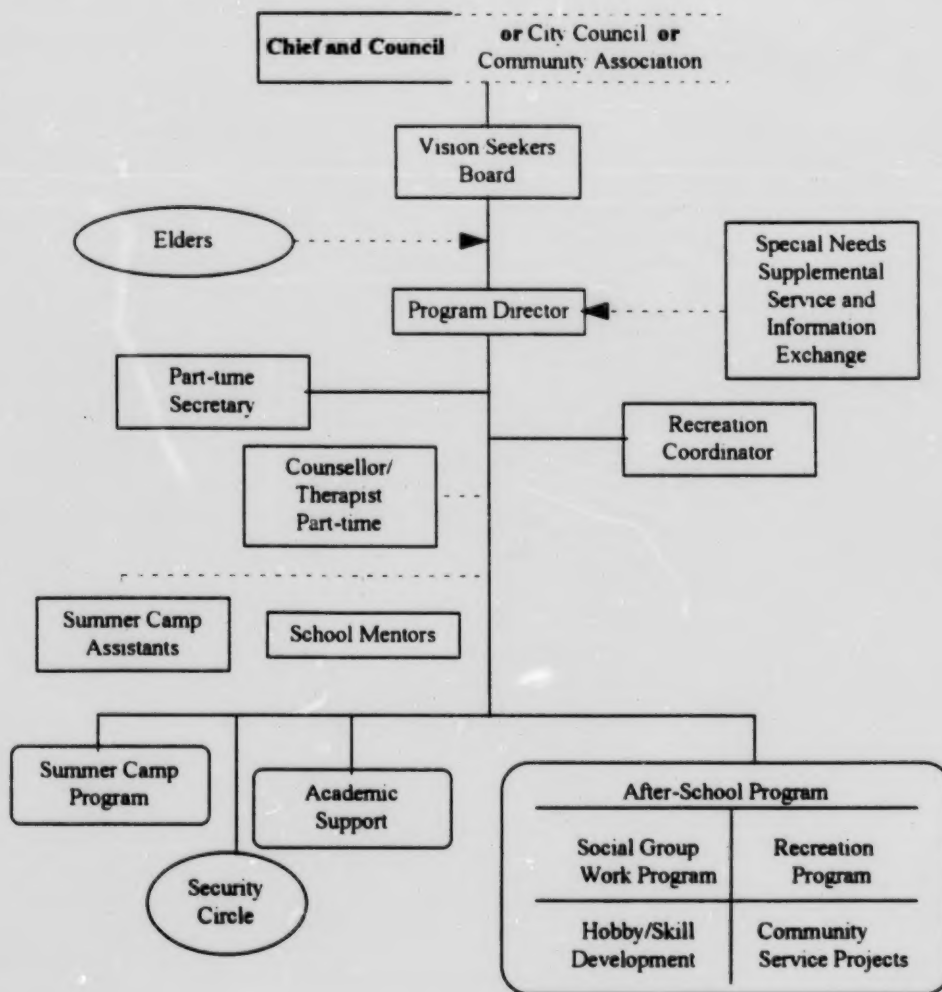
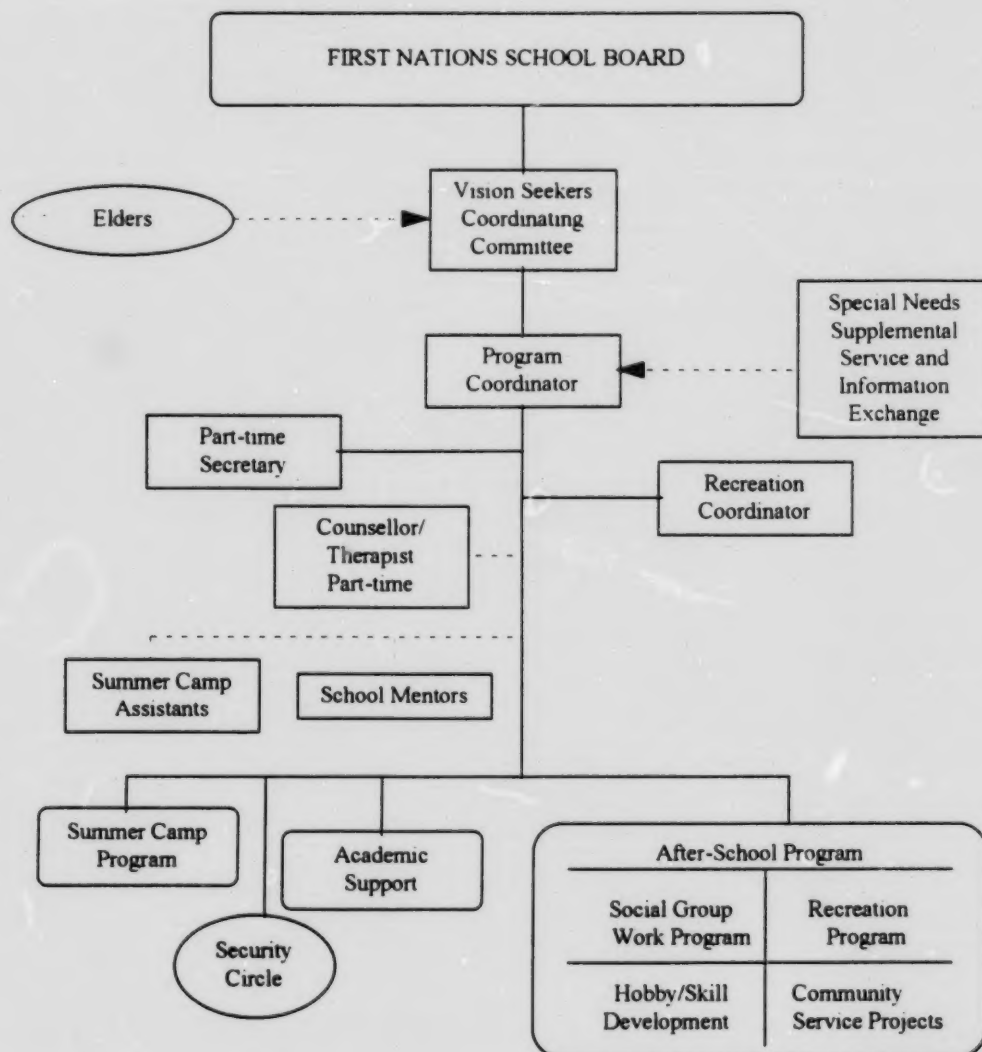


Figure 3: Example of Vision Seekers Program Integrated with Existing Program



4. **Job Descriptions:** All of the personnel contributing to the planning or operations of the program could benefit from a job description, the contents of which have the support of both management and staff. The description might include the (a) title of the job (b) a summary of the job and (c) the duties associated with the job, including any supervisory responsibilities and (c) qualifications (mandatory and/or preferred).

The job identification will include the title of the position, the title of the immediate supervisor, and the date the job description was prepared.

The job summary is a brief description of the job, highlighting the general responsibilities and the basic characteristics of the work to be performed.

The most important section is the one describing the duties and how they should be performed. When you write the job descriptions, you should adopt the following guidelines:

- a. avoid generalities in describing each duty: be specific;
- b. use short phrases rather than lengthy statements;
- c. list major responsibilities (the core functions) first; list less important functions in descending order;
- d. specify *when* each duty should be performed (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, when called upon, etc).

You should also . . .

- e. start each statement describing a job duty with an action verb such as *operate, direct, report, etc.*
- f. enlist the help of the staff person in developing the job description or job standards; and
- g. finish the list of duties with the statement "other duties as may be required."

5. **Employment Status.** You should distinguish between full-time, part-time and temporary employment status, as well as contractual expectations in setting out your employment policy.

6. **Issues of Pay and Performance:** You should deal with the following issues of relevance to personnel management:

- a specification of when, how and who will be responsible for performance reviews
- a specification of when, how and whom will be responsible for a salary review—and the criteria for modifications in pay
- a policy on "moonlighting"—that is, is outside employment acceptable and, if so, how much?
- reimbursement for expenses (circumstances and rates)

- use of personal vehicles (mileage per diem)
- work hours
- hours of operation
- hiring, voluntary and involuntary termination and pay increases
- benefits, including:
 - vacation
 - leaves: sick leave, bereavement/funeral leave; personal leave; family and medical leave; general leaves of absence
 - unemployment insurance
 - pension
 - worker's compensation
 - employee education
 - employee assistance program
- expected standards of conduct and methods of resolving problems, disciplining staff for violations and staff appeals of disciplinary actions
- attendance policies.

7. General Information

- Telephone procedures
- gifts to the program
- program property
- smoking policy
- automobile liability coverage
- sexual harassment

8. Participant Rules

Participants should have clearly defined rules of participation. Some of these rules will be specific to their individualized program of personal growth but others affect the growth of the other individuals, the growth of the group as a whole, and health and safety and property protection. The following categories of rules should be considered:

- Expectations of a basic commitment to program rules

- Policy on swearing—if and when appropriate
- Expectation of verbal respect for staff
- No alcohol or drugs on premises
- No weapons on premises or in off-premise activities organized as part of the programming
- No verbal threats or physical violence
- Expectation of respect for different values and religious beliefs
- Expectations *vis-a-vis* use of equipment, furniture and treatment of premises or facilities or vehicles used outside of Vision Seekers regular meeting premises

Disciplinary procedures for failure to live up to expectations must also be clearly identified as policies—and, of course, participants must be fully aware about these policies and the consequences to be faced in violating them.

9. Critical Participant Stress Situations and Critical Incident Management

A specific protocol should also be developed to deal with critical incidents, serious health or life-threatening events in the lives of clients, including how to prevent them, to intervene in them once initiated, and how to deal with the after-effects of them. Policies should be developed that provide clear instructions to staff and Mentors regarding how to deal with the following:

- Strong evidence of physical or sexual abuse of a participant and if, when, how and who to contact the police and child welfare authorities regarding such evidence
- Sexual innuendoes, sexual harassment and threatened sexual abuse amongst participants
- Sexual abuse during program hours or amongst participants after hours
- Intensely hostile verbal exchanges between participants
- Vandalism
- Participant threats against staff or other students
- The outbreak of a physical fight during program time
- Generally disruptive behaviour

10. Statement of Participant Rights

All participants have the right to participate in the program *and* to withdraw. S/he also has a number of rights that should be clearly understood by staff and participants alike.

In addition to local concerns that you might have, you should consider spelling out the following:

A participant not only has the right to refuse to participate in the program but also the right to refuse certain types of involvements in programming, such as religious or spiritual ceremonies, games or group exercises that are objectionable or fear-invoking. If none of the activities are satisfactory to the participant, of course, participation should be carefully reviewed and expulsion should be considered as a viable alternative. Further, if refusal of a part of the program prevents the participant from receiving any significant program benefits, then it would be appropriate to have a policy that denied the individual participation.

When the participant begins to receive services as part of the program, s/he should be told if the program has a policy about participants who break the program rules. When beginning to implement the program, participants should be given a written list of procedures which explain the following:

- the types of behaviour that can lead to denial of further participation or specific benefits of participation and other disciplinary procedures
- who has the authority to deny participation and invoke disciplinary procedures and what the parent(s)' or guardian's role
- how the participant may appeal the denial of further participation
- what the parent's (or guardian's) role will be in dealing with the appeal.

11. Confidentiality

At least in part, Vision Seekers is a therapeutic program and, consequently, files on each participant will have to be maintained by *both* the Counsellor and the Program Director. Additional staff and the Mentors may also want to maintain files.

Participants and/or their parents should be able to review only a summary of any of these files and the Director and Counsellor should probably both have the right to deny client access, depending on the circumstances. Court requests for participant files must be judged individually, although in most cases, summaries should only be provided unless court demands require disclosure.

Band Councillors, Health Board or Education authorities should not have access to individual files, including summaries, unless dispute resolution issues are at stake; in the latter case, materials related to client progress or a specific incident might be offered to an oversight body or its representative. In general, it is critical to parental and participant trust in the program and its staff that participants' files be kept confidential.

The parent should be fully informed of the nature of the program and should understand that children will sometimes be talking about family issues in a counselling and group

context. Disclosure of information regarding discussions about family matters should only be provided to the parent with the child's consent.

Disclosure of information about a participant to any authorities without the parent's consent should only occur when:

- a medical emergency is involved
- when it is authorized by a court order
- when the child is at risk because of a potential abuse or negligent care situation

At times, participants may be ordered by the courts or a juvenile protection or corrections officer to participate in the program. If your program allows "ordered" participation, then you should get the parent and the child to consent in writing to unrestricted communication between the program and the court or child welfare authority. However, it is ill-advised to share such information with any other organization or individuals. It is also ill-advised to let *either* the courts or child welfare authorities to dominate program referrals. It changes the entire nature of the program *if* it is seen as an extension of either the corrections system or child welfare system.

You might also want to have a policy in place of providing attendance information on a restricted basis as follows:

- a participant's child welfare or probation officer without written consent
- the police, without written consent
- anyone outside your program with written consent
- the participant's family without written consent

12. Assessment and Reporting of Suspected Abuse

Staff should be sensitive to evidence that may be consistent with abuse, including physical assaults, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and abuse of elders or children. Written policies and procedures should describe how staff members are to conduct the assessment of possible abuse. The relevant statements should specify how staff members are to conduct assessments of possible abuse. Further, the instructions should specify the informed consent procedures to be used and reporting mechanisms required by law and (when and where appropriate) Band protocols or bylaws.

Any clinical record of the counsellor connected with the program in which the question of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect is raised should have progress notes that demonstrate that staff members have taken appropriate action in reporting the abuse.

Any clinical record in which the question of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect is raised should include progress notes that demonstrate that staff members have taken appropriate action in reporting the abuse.

In formulating criteria for handling the assessment of abuse and its reporting, staff should be aware of Provincial law and Indian Child and Family Service regulations. Criminal law implications should also be clearly understood. Staff education about abuse/neglect reporting should be a part of the orientation of all staff members and part of the ongoing staff education program. In developing the program, Provincial officials, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Indian Child and Family Service Agency officials should be called upon to advise you in your policy development and procedures protocol development process.

7.2 RECRUITING AND MANAGING STAFF

The process of recruiting staff is one that should be taken *very* seriously for, ultimately, it is the personnel who will have primary responsibility for making the program work. It is into the hands of staff that you are entrusting children whose life experiences have placed them at considerable risk. Whereas it is tempting on all reserves to restrict hiring to candidates selected from amongst one's own First Nation, when recruiting to a program such as Vision Seekers, the potential for program effectiveness and the welfare of the children must always be the ultimate criteria for staff selection.

Staff positions should be advertised with specific training and experience designated as baseline criteria for employment. These criteria should include:

- formal training of relevance to the job (Note: Ideally, the Director should be trained in social work, with some specialized training in group work as well as some specialized training in abnormal psychology. The individual in charge of recreational programming should have some training in physical education or recreational administration and should have some background in group work [or be willing to take a course]).
- Demonstrated leadership and initiative-taking abilities are essential.
- The individuals responsible for the program should have at least two years of successful, relevant experience, as indicated by reputable references (and references should definitely be checked).
- The individuals should have a reputation for maturity of judgement.
- The individuals in these positions should have extensive familiarity with contemporary cultural norms of the First Nation or tribal group they are expected to work with.

7.2.1 - REFERENCES

Checking references is a very important part of screening. All too often, hiring panels working for First Nations' organizations, subject to local and family hiring pressures, become so anxious about the key issue of supporting or blocking a particular person's candidacy that they forget to do reference checks. If you do such checks, you should have the permission of the candidate, of course, and, further, you must ask questions related to work performance only—*not* to personality, values, or the individual's private life, *unless* those matters have had

a direct impact on work performance. With the candidate's permission, you might also secure *character* references, which might address some of the issues that are more delicate to ask about.

7.2.2 - SCREENING FOR SERIOUSLY INAPPROPRIATE HISTORIES

Ultimately, the Vision Seekers program is a child welfare and child development program. The interests of the children must take priority at all times. Candidates should also be screened through an appropriate child abuse and criminal records check. While such measures may seem excessive at the front end of the program, a mistake in selection can destroy the program and, in some instances, result in a negative experience that increases the vulnerability of children to health and social risks.

7.2.3 - REMUNERATION : SOMETIMES YOU MUST PAY MORE!

If you have an especially good candidate but the individual expects somewhat more in salary than your budget allows, before you reject the individual's candidacy out of hand, consider your options. You may be able to move money from another source into the budget allocated for the key position(s) in Vision Seekers. You may be able to shift part of your NNADAP or community health budget to this item—especially if you are operating under a Transfer Agreement. If you have a fund-raising capacity, you may consider an annual fund-raising event or series of events as an approach to supplementing the income needed to recruit for the position.

Should the Vision Seekers' Staff be Employed as 'Independent' Program Staff, as Contractual Employees or as Line Employees of the Health Clinic, School or Band Administration?

Whether or not the staff of Vision Seekers should simply be integrated into your existing health clinic or school staff or become employees of a "stand alone" program will depend on the nature of your community situation. There are no ideal answers to this question. What is important is that the Director and other key staff devote full-time (or all of their part-time assignment) to the Vision Seekers program. Staff should not be drawn into various peripheral responsibilities that reduce their work-time expenditure on Vision Seekers. The organizational structure that surrounds your Director should be the one that can provide the most support for the program

Whether fully separate from another service delivery structure or wholly integrated with one, it is important that the program operate primarily according to a set of distinctive operating principles and as an organizational unit unto itself. The very nature of the program demands a strong group identity which is most easily sustained through some sense of group autonomy.

On those reserves with their own school, it will probably be the school administration (in the city, perhaps a community school organization or school board) that would serve as the parent organizational structure. In those without an on-reserve school, the parent organization might well be the Indian Child and Family Service (ICFS) agency or the community health service. A recreational organization is another possibility, of course.

A contractual arrangement with staff can offer the employer the benefit of avoiding the administrative work of benefit management by simply paying out a block payment at whatever intervals are mutually agreeable. Contractual work can also save the Band some money by paying a substantial salary with sufficiently fewer benefits that the net amount is less than a salary plus benefits package, allowing the employee to work out his or her own financial alternatives to a benefit package (and some private arrangements can be more attractive if cleverly arranged). From the employee's perspective, working on contract allows for the perception that the individual is an independent professional whose career has involved the choice of private practice vs. public, long-term employment.

7.2.4 - VOLUNTARY TERMINATIONS

The employment-at-will principle applies to employees as well as management. An employee can terminate his or her employment at any time and for any reason. Most often, this is done when an employee accepts a position with another organization, but it might be quitting for personal reasons or because of differences with other staff or for family reasons.

A period of notice should be specified in your statement of policies and procedures. Two weeks is a reasonable minimum period but a period of up to two months is also reasonable. From the employee's perspective, the quicker the time it takes to terminate employment the better; from the employer's perspective, haste is sometimes important but, to allow time for certain work to get done and for the participation of an outgoing employee in orienting the new worker, a few weeks is advantageous.

7.2.5 - INVOLUNTARY TERMINATIONS

An involuntary termination or "lay-off," should only occur when performance does not meet expectations, when rule infractions occur, when reductions in the size of the work force must be made.

7.2.6 - EXIT INTERVIEWS

Whether an employee leaves or is voluntarily terminated, there are advantages in conducting an exit interview with the individual. An exit interview is a good tool for gaining information about the way the organization is functioning, the competence and fairness of management, and the competence of staff.

7.3 SUMMARY

Several aspects of human resource development have been considered in this chapter. It was emphasized that the careful selection of board members and staff is vital to the success of a Vision Seekers program. Considerable attention should be paid to both. Board members should be recruited who can make a real, practical contribution to the program and who work positively, thoughtfully and reasonably in board meetings. Qualifications and ability should dominate hiring, *not* local employment preferences. Staff should be treated as the program's most precious resource (other than the kids, of course), and they should be treated accordingly. Clear, well-defined policies should be drafted and followed to ensure that staff are not only treated fairly but that they are treated fairly within a framework that ensures the interests of Vision Seekers' participants are *always* the first order of concern.



8.0 IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

In this chapter, a process is recommended for *choosing* the children who should be included in the program, as well as the process of selecting replacements for those who drop-out or for some reason, can no longer continue in the *Vision Seekers* program. Given the target group parameters, the preferable entry age for participation would be eleven to twelve years old and the oldest completion age would therefore be fourteen years of age.

The chapter begins with a description of a method for identifying the target group population and selecting prime candidates for the program. The process of explaining the program to the targeted children and their families, recruiting them and orienting them to the goals and expectations of the program is described in the latter part of the chapter.

8.1 IDENTIFYING THE TARGET GROUP AND CREATING A SHORT-LIST

The method for determining who is to be included on the list of invited program participants in *Vision Seekers*, meaning both children and their families, should attempt to satisfy four criteria: (1) whether or not the child can be categorized as falling into the high social risk (HSR) category (2) the compatibility of the child with the system needs of the program and its participants, taken as a group-as-a-whole; and (3) the willingness and/or availability of a parent, non-parental guardian or parental substitute, to participate in the program in a supportive way and (4) the willingness of the child to participate.

While placing the child at the end of this sequence might suggest that the child's willingness is the last consideration, in fact, the order in which these criteria are presented simply implies the order in which the identification/recruitment process must unfold. Actually, the child's willingness is of the utmost importance, followed by the readiness of a parent or parent substitute to participate.

While, at first glance, it seems contradictory to exclude those youth with parents (or parent-substitutes) who are unwilling to participate because the children of such parents are typically those in the targeted, high social risk category. However, the research literature and this author's impressions clearly indicate that there is very little chance for a child to succeed if an adult with a personal bond with the child is not involved. The idea is to have someone who acts as a sort of embodiment of a watchful "superego," someone who is "rooting in the corner" as the child struggles through the program towards his/her goals.

It should be a principal function of staff to find immediate family or extended members willing to play supportive roles. The School Mentor also offers an important dimension of the kind of emotional support required.

Whether or not a child should be included in the high social risk category — i.e., whether they "fit" the criteria — should be based on a sort of reconnaissance mission amongst individuals in the community who have special knowledge of the circumstances of families and the behaviours of children. To identify the children most likely to benefit from the *Vision Seekers* program, a brief, structured interview, conducted by the Program Coordinator, is

recommended with all health, social development, education and police personnel serving the reserve community (or, in the case of a city program, with teachers and social workers serving the families in the area surrounding a school). These interviews should be based on a pre-set schedule of questions that asks the interviewee to generate a short list of children who fit a specific set of criteria. A list of children from the reserve who fall into the appropriate age category should be the focus of the interview, and the list can be shared with the human service worker or police personnel to help them identify HSR children. Equivalent approaches can be pursued in off-reserve setting, with name lists drawn from teachers and community workers.

Some Considerations for Conducting the 'Participant Short List' Selection Interviews

A note of caution should be made to the Coordinator conducting the interview. You should be very clear about the purpose of the interview and why it is important. Stick to your pre-selected questions and make it known that parents have *not* been contacted at this point but that, instead, you are simply short-listing potential candidates on the basis of suggestions from various people who work with children or who have extensive opportunities to observe them.

By the way, this is an excellent opportunity to explain and promote the program, so have an enthusiastic pitch well-honed for the introduction. You should also explain how it is mandated (i.e., by Chief and Council, etc., perhaps with a letter as proof), and with an emphasis placed on the confidentiality of the interview and the information gleaned from it. You should also take into account any known biases that might distort the interviewee's view of who is at high risk and who is not. Local health and social development workers may be party to disputes between families and may have an "axe to grind" when they identify a child as "having problems."

Depending on the size of the reserve or local community, the names of children repeated by more than one of these knowledgeable informants should be short-listed. That short-list should then be used as a basis for selecting 8 to 12 or more children, with a full-time staffing ratio of between 4 to 6 participants per core worker, with numbers depending on the intensity of the problem profile presented by the children. If the children can be expected to be extremely resistant to authority or several of them have special needs, then fewer should be included.

It is recommended that a selection workshop be held with the same individuals who have been

the subjects of the initial selection interviews. The program initiator or, if available, a mental health therapist, should be asked to facilitate the selection process. A selection process is outlined below.

8.2 RECOMMENDED SELECTION PROCESS AFTER THE SHORT-LISTING

The Workshop Facilitator might recommend to the panellists that they should examine the suitability of each potential recruit by rating them on a set of scales on a questionnaire. Each panellist should do the ratings privately and then, having used that process as a means of focussing, the panellists should collectively complete the scales. An attempt to include a fair representation of each gender, male and female, is recommended. In order to do this, two short lists should be created and then the selection panellists can work separately on male and female groups for the final cut.

By totalling the points for each candidate, your panellists should be able to reduce the total to a list that would include a group approximating three-quarters or two-thirds of the most at-risk group of participants for the male and female group.

After the second round short list of potential recruits on the basis of a discussion built around the scales (or other suitable method), the program staff and the selection panellists should examine the mix of students to determine if the group might be too volatile or difficult to manage. Factors that should be considered include the following:

- Caution should be exercised if the membership includes gang members (or cliques that behave informally as if they were gangs). *Great* caution should be exercised before including rival gang members.
- The judgement of the Program Coordinator should be respected regarding the physical manageability of recruits. Some adolescents can be very difficult to handle and, at times, decisions to exclude one or more such children may be necessary in order to ensure the quality of the program and the safety of the other participants.
- Sometimes specific parents are notorious for interfering with anything their children are involved with. Such children need not be excluded but some firm ground rules regarding who is in charge during program time should be laid down, as well as the expectations of the parents regarding the giving respect to the program staff.
- If a group of children are known to be suicidal, it would be unwise to encourage their participation as a group unless extra staffing can be secured to assist the children in working through their issues and overcoming their self-destructive tendencies.

Exhibit 4 VISION SEEKERS' CHILD-AT-RISK SCALES (VIS-CARS)

The following scales are recommended: *Note: U = Unknown*

History of Behavioural Problems in School

Extensive — Frequent — Occasional — Rare — Never — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Frequency of Overt Expressions of Hostility to Peers (Verbal and Physical Attacks)

Extreme — Often — Occasional — Rare — Never — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Frequency of Overt Expressions of Disrespect for Authority of Adults

Extreme — Often — Occasional — Rare — Never — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Reputation for Delinquencies

Widespread — Strong — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Degree of Social Isolation/Social Detachment

Extreme — Exceptional — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Apparent risk of parental/caregiver neglect

Extreme — Exceptional — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Apparent risk of physical abuse from parent or other primary caregiver

Extreme — Exceptional — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Apparent risk of self-destructive behaviours

Extreme — Exceptional — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

(For Females only) Apparent risk of unplanned pregnancy

Extreme — Exceptional — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Apparent problem of alcohol or drug abuse

Extreme — Exceptional — Moderate — Slight — None — Don't Know
4 3 2 1 0 U

Note: Begin with a short list that includes only those falling between 30-40 and then work from there, adding or subtracting from the list to come up with an appropriate number, as determined by the ratio.

8.3 EXPLAINING THE PROGRAM TO PARENTS

The task of approaching parents regarding the participation of their children in the Vision Seekers program can be a tricky one; it can easily result in flat refusals by parents if it is handled clumsily. After all, the residents of the community are likely to have heard that a program for "troubled youth" called *Vision Seekers* is going to be introduced into the community. For a parent to have their child singled out as one of the few who will be involved can be hurtful, even if they recognize their child might benefit. Ultimately, the best policy is honesty.

The parent should be given the simple message that,

1. Professionals in the community believe that many children from the reserve (or inner city community), including their son *Johnny*, could benefit from participation in an after school recreational and educational program. Why? You might answer: "Because they were aware that *Johnny* was having difficulties getting along with teachers and the other kids at school and seemed to be particularly unhappy. Would you agree with that?"
2. Tell them how children were picked, simply saying that children were short listed if their teachers or health and social development workers thought they could benefit from the program and they thought they might enjoy it. Also tell them that another consideration was whether or not their youngster would be sufficiently cooperative to participate (as opposed to being too disruptive. This latter criteria sends a positive message that will appeal to parents who might feel that the very inclusion of their child in the program is a statement that they are not adequate parents.
3. The parent should then be asked: *Do you think Johnny (etc.) might like to be in the program?* Then ask if you could talk to the potential recruit to see if he or she really would like to be involved. If the parent approves, then confirmation in writing and a release form should be signed indicating that the parent approves of the child's participation. At a later date, a release form should be secured from the parent indicating that temporary custodial care is placed in the hands of program staff during the time the children are involved in program activities.

8.4 FINALIZING THE LIST OF RECRUITS

There will occasionally be situations in which parents will not allow their children to participate. Sometimes children on your short list will simply refuse to participate. In such circumstances, it is recommended that you simply return to your longer short list and proceed with the next selections as substitutes.

8.5 EXPLAINING THE PROGRAM TO THE POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

An individual interview should be conducted with each potential participant, if possible in a private location. Why "private?" Quite simply because the child might use the situation to react to a parent or the parent/child relationship may be such that the child fears the parent or does not want to speak openly in front of the parent. Remember, in explaining the program, reference will have to be made to some indicators of the child's problems and the child may not wish to disclose information about his or her more rebellious or antisocial actions in front of a parent.

In order to avoid the initiation of a strong labelling process, the interview should not in any way leave the child with the impression that s/he is amongst the "worst kids on the reserve" (or local community) or that participation in the program is a reward for having problems. A description and explanation of the program should include the following elements:

- The activities in the program should be described, including the fact that many of the "challenges" will be custom-tailored to the child's own aptitudes and interests. The various "perks" associated with the program should also be described.
- It should be explained to the child that probably all kids from the reserve (or local community) would enjoy and benefit from Vision Seekers, but there are only so many resources to go around—and some will benefit more and some will better stand up to its challenges (*Note: A sense of being from the "chosen few" is always an encouragement to a young teen*).
- It should be explained that s/he has been picked for three reasons: (1) people in contact with him (or her) have suggested that he has experienced some difficulties lately (elaborate on this) and that there might be some benefit to be gained from participating in the program, like having something interesting to do after school, developing a hobby, like improving school work and making some good friends and (further) (2) it was felt that s/he would "fit in" with the mix of children in the program and (3) program staff believe that s/he can "make it" through the program and come out the better for participation in it.

8.6 PRELIMINARY ORIENTATION OF THE PARENTS AND THE CHILDREN

The parent and the child should be brought to the first meeting of the after-school segment of the program and given a full orientation to the schedule of activities and how it will proceed, the transportation arrangements and the expectations of parents and children.

8.7 FIRING THE COMMITMENT: THE VISION SEEKERS TREATIES

After the children have gone through the process of setting goals with the Counsellor and the program challenge goals, the Program Director should host a special social event and dinner that will include program staff, parents, children and community leaders. The central

ceremony should involve the signing of a *Vision Seeker Treaty* that could include the signature of the child, his or her parent(s), the Program Director and the Chief (if on a reserve). Each Treaty should also receive the blessing of a respected Elder.



9.0 FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

Counselling support for the participants should be a key element of virtually any Vision Seekers program. Economic realities will dictate that organizers utilize whatever services are locally available, so long as they are of sufficient quality. In many reserve situations, a mental health therapist will be available and s/he can prove an invaluable asset to the personal growth of the individual participants and to their parents and families as a whole.

If a trained mental health worker is not available, the Band's NNADAP worker, a social worker or a nurse with psychiatric nursing or specific training in counselling might be utilized, if one of them is willing. The skills of the worker and the time he or she may have available to devote to the program are the crucial considerations. It is also critical that the counsellor is experienced and familiar with the cultural orientation and social realities of the aboriginal group s/he works with. In the absence of such a resource person, a school guidance counsellor or the individual selected to coordinate the actual program might serve as the counsellor (assuming that counselling skills criteria were built into your recruitment/selection process). In Canada, in First Nations operating under Health Transfer Agreements with Medical Services Branch, the *Brighter Futures* program is a potential source of funding for a contracted mental health support worker to serve on a part-time basis.

In off-reserve settings, provincial, state (i.e., if the program is implemented in the United States, New Zealand or Australia) or district mental health programs, workers should be called upon to provide support to the Vision Seekers program or, if alternative funding sources are available, it may be possible to contract a counsellor on a part-time basis. In some urban school settings, arrangements might be made for professional counsellors working within the school district to provide services.

There are really five major points of contact recommended between counsellors and participants and their families; these are as follows:

1. at the point of participant and family orientation;
2. a minimum of four counselling sessions per program year with the individual child;
3. a minimum of three counselling sessions per program year with parents or guardians;
4. counselling referrals from program personnel for the child or child and parents;
5. from two to four counselling sessions per family per year for the family as a whole.

9.1 RECOMMENDED APPROACH TO COUNSELLING

An understanding of counselling should be acquired by all those involved as stakeholders in the Vision Seekers program. A history of having to "make do" with untrained counsellors has served to undervalue the role of counsellor in First Nations' communities and, consequently, some education of those in contact with the program is necessary. It may not

take the genius of a rocket scientist to make a good counsellor but it is unlikely that a rocket scientist, lacking in specialized training in the discipline of counselling, would be effective in counselling people.

The problems that counselling skills are designed to address are often intractable and defiant of any obvious solution. People problems are often shrouded in considerable mystery.

Counselling skills are partly derived from the personality and interests of the counsellor; they are also partly an art form that can only be learned with practice. Not just any personality is likely to fit the "good counsellor" role and skill acquisition does require education and training.

Finally, counselling is an art that should derive its methods from a scientific base of knowledge derived from evaluative research literature.

So it is important for those overseeing the program, working within the program, or working in a mentoring capacity with one of the participants to have an understanding of what professional counselling is, what it isn't, what its limitations are and what it can be expected to accomplish.

The reasons for having an appreciation of the counsellor's role will vary with the individual's connection to the program, but all of those overseeing the work of a counsellor or those working directly with the counsellor should have a basic and realistic understanding of what should be expected from counsellors and the counselling process.

There are a wide variety of theoretical models that counsellors believe best describe their understanding about why and how counselling works and what techniques follow from that understanding. As Egan (1990) has correctly observed, irrespective of the theoretical model adhered to by the Counsellor, counselling must go through various stages in order to be successful. These stages include defining and clarifying the nature of the individual's problems or the problems experienced by a family, developing goals, and linking those goals to specific actions. Velleman (1992), a British addictions specialist, suggests that conceptualizing counselling as having six stages may be more useful than Egan's less elaborate triad. These stages are as follows:

- Stage 1: developing the client's trust;
- Stage 2: exploring problem areas;
- Stage 3: helping the client set goals;
- Stage 4: empowering into action;
- Stage 5: helping to maintain change;
- Stage 6: agreeing when to end.

As Velleman further observes, these stages of counselling apply to all problem areas, and

hence they are just as important to the client with substance abuse problems as they are to the client with an anger management problem, a problem of low self-esteem, or any other type of problem. In fact, as counselling experience generally suggests, typically, many of these problems co-exist and all of them must be taken into account at both the assessment and the goal-setting stage.

In fact, these stages of counselling actually draw together the most important assumptions at the foundation of contemporary counselling—assumptions grounded in the most influential theoretical and scientific contributions to the field.

These baseline assumptions in counselling include the following:

1. *Empathy*. Empathy is the principal route to understanding clients in counselling—and of enabling them to *feel* understood. The Counsellor should be able to develop a clear sense of how the client understands a problem and to communicate that sense of understanding to the client. The counsellor does this by placing himself or herself in the place of the client and understanding the problem from the client's vantage point.
2. *Warmth and Caring*. These terms, which are closely related, refer to key qualities characterizing the emotional response of counsellors, and they tend to accompany an attitude of empathy. Warmth refers to a personal psychological closeness, as opposed to professional distance and detachment. Caring is an expression of this warmth; it refers to the communication of concern about the client and the outcomes of the helping process centred on the counselling effort. The helping skill involved here is the ability to convey this feeling of closeness and affection without establishing emotional entanglements and dependencies, which tend to make counselling part of the problem rather than part of the solution.
3. *Genuineness*. One of the principal goals in the beginning of a helping relationship is to encourage clients to disclose their thoughts and to speak and express their feelings freely to the counsellor. This self-disclosure tends to be encouraged by the counsellor's openness. The fundamental condition of trust, furthermore, is directly dependent upon the extent to which the helper and helpee are open to and accepting of one another. A term that is often used by counselling psychologists to this same, positive trait of a helping relationship is *genuineness*. Rogers referred to a state in which the counsellor's words are consistent with her actions. Another similar term used in counselling contexts that is *authenticity*—the opposite of fake or phony.
4. *Positive Regard and Respect*. This characteristic of a good counselling relationship is an attitude that expresses not only the counsellor's concern about the client's welfare but also respect for her or his individuality. Some writers express this condition as "unconditional positive regard," which means a nonjudgemental attitude to the client and his problems.
5. *Concreteness and Specificity*. A key enabling condition for accurate, clear communication with clients is the ability to be specific rather than general or vague. The effective counsellor models concreteness but also confronts the client about her own vagueness and lack of specificity, urging focus and concreteness in order to accurately pinpoint the elements of the problem and to establish manageable solutions. The counsellor should also assist the client

to focus more on the present rather than on the past and future. The use of clear "I" statements that focus on specific actions in the immediate future rather than "they say" or "it seems" statements that divert from the core problems are encouraged.

Given the profound influence of the social environment on the generation of the personal problems of Native American peoples, it is essential that the counsellor have a clear sense of the linkage between social context and behaviour and mental states and social influences. The socio-cognitive orientation at the foundation of Vision Seekers would encourage the use of counsellors who have backgrounds in *both* sociology and cognitive-behavioural psychology, who have some understanding of family therapy, and who have a keen awareness of the unique nature of Indian family systems, social networks and communities.

The Importance of Family and Network Therapy to Effective Counselling with First Nations Youth

No human being with personal problems can be effectively assisted through counselling processes unless their social interactions are taken into account. People influence their social environment and they are influenced by it in return. Social support systems, which may be defined as enduring patterns of human interaction which help an individual to sustain a minimal level of physical, emotional, social and spiritual health, provide the primary medium through which interpersonal influences are processed.

The social network that tends to have the greatest influence on the prevention, development and solution of personal problems is the family. If family members can be the primary contributors to the development and reinforcement of the personal troubles of youth, they can also have highly positive effects on the youth's willingness and ability to overcome those troubles. The fact that families have this diametrically opposed potential is the basis for the type of counselling intervention called *family therapy*.

While there are a variety of "schools" (theoretical approaches) of family therapy, what is common to most of them is the primary emphasis they place on the relationships among members rather than on the individual dynamics of each member. The statement: "He never cares about my feelings" can be understood in many different ways. The individually-oriented therapist hears the statement as an expression about how the individual feels, which may be sadness or anger. The systems-oriented therapist hears it more as a statement about a relationship between two people. When a child says to a parent, "If you would just treat me more like dad does," the individually-oriented therapist hears the child's frustration and anger towards one parent. By contrast, the family systems-oriented therapist hears this but also hears that a *relationship* triangle may exist between the parents and the child. The systems-oriented therapist may also hear more indirectly about the conflicting relationship between the two parents, who are in active disagreement on how to deal with the child.

Whereas an individually-oriented therapist highlights the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the individual person, the systems-orientation keys in on patterns of family interaction: repetitive sequences of action and reaction between all of the members of the family.

An extension of family therapy is *Network Therapy*, which also adopts a systems orientation but which extends the locus of intervention from the family to the web of close interpersonal relations existing just beyond the family. As in all communities, social networks play an extremely significant role in the lives of the peoples of the First Nations. Counsellors in Vision Seekers should be particularly vigilant in considering the continuity of on- and off-reserve networks within which the participant's family is involved, as well as the peer group relations born by the participant him or herself.

Engaging Social Support

In recent years, social workers, counsellors and applied social psychologists and sociologists have emphasized the fact that "social support systems" or "natural support systems" offer the "first line of assistance" to the troubled individual. The longstanding interest of many mental health scholars and practitioners in promoting an emphasis on primary and secondary prevention-oriented services rather than acute care services has encouraged a special interest in personal support systems. The research and theoretical literature on social support interventions is interdisciplinary, involving such diverse fields as sociology, biology, business administration, anthropology, social work, psychology, and education. According to Pearson (1990: 15) there are three issues with important implications for support-oriented interventions in counselling:

- What is the nature of the interpersonal ties that make up the context of the individual's experience?
- What is the impact of, and function served by, the social support that the individual in counselling receives through his or her interpersonal relationships?
- How can social support from natural or devised support systems be made more available to the individual needing help?

While sociologists have long emphasized the importance of social bonding to mental health, in recent years, the influence of social support systems on mental health status has also been stressed by epidemiologists and psychiatrists. Doing much to stimulate interest in this area, two important contributions to this research were made over twenty years ago by the American epidemiological researcher, John Cassel (1974), and by Gerald Caplan (1974), an American psychiatrist. Cassel had observed that some social conditions, such as urbanization or rapid social change, cut people off from the network of people who traditionally had provided feedback about the practicality of certain attitudes and beliefs and the effectiveness of certain behaviours. Cut off from the reality checks provided by the normal operations of such networks, individuals are apt to feel that they don't know "what's going on" or how well they are doing. Such uncertainty can lead to heightened stress and heightened physical and emotional disorders as a consequence.

Caplan was impressed with Cassel's "buffering effect" hypothesis, which held that social

support networks have a significant buffering impact, shielding the individual from the intensity of some of the stressors that can result in mental health problems. In his book *Support Systems and Community Mental Health* (1974), Caplan observed that social support systems assist individuals in maintaining their mental health by (a) helping them mobilize their own psychobiological resources when stressors are encountered (b) providing assistance in meeting the requirements of the situations they are in (c) making such material resources as money, needed materials, and skills available and (d) providing guidance and helpful advice.

Pearson (1990:17) argues that since Caplan and Cassel wrote, there has been a steady accumulation of relevant knowledge about social support and its helping effects. In an examination of the role of social support in helping persons cope with work stress, House (1981) summarized the current understanding of the specific ways in which social support assists individuals:

- ▶ As supportiveness increases, the presence of negative influences in individuals' life situations is reduced or eliminated
- ▶ A supportive environment serves to increase the general health of the individual, thus increasing their ability to withstand the negative effects of noxious physical and social impacts.
- ▶ Social support aids individuals by buffering them, fully or partially, from the negative impact of stressors in the environment.

Specific Roles of the Counsellor in Vision Seekers

The Counsellor will lend support to the program in a number of specific ways, s/he will be involved in providing the following services:

1. Orientation

This program element involves preparing the child and his/her family for participation in the *Vision Seekers* program and securing a well understood commitment to the program. It also involves screening out those whom, predictably, are unlikely to participate with a sufficient degree of interest to give the program a reasonable chance and/or those who are obviously going to be so disruptive to program operations that their participation is ill-advised. While this latter element of the "screen" admittedly seems counterproductive to the very purpose of the program, *Vision Seekers* is a *social* process and it requires a certain minimum of cooperative relations to function effectively.

As part of the orientation, the Counsellor must therefore participate actively in the screening process, acting, along with the Program Director, as facilitators of the screening process. The screening itself will also involve two people from the oversight body (board or committee) whom, along with the Director and the Counsellor, would form a selection panel.

If the parents have agreed to have their child be considered for participation in the program, they will have been asked by the Coordinator to send the child to an interview with the

Coordinator and the Counsellor.

At the interview with the Counsellor, the Program Coordinator should meet the participant and share some information about Vision Seekers but should absent him/herself from the second part of the session, which should involve the beginnings of a full assessment of the child's needs and their potential fit with the program offerings. After the interview is completed, the assessment should be expanded to include information from the child's parents. At this point, permission should be sought to secure further information from such people as the school guidance counsellor, the local police, and other professional staff who may have relevant information. The Counsellor will participate in the second interview with the family and in a private interview in the second part of the Coordinator's session with the child (i.e., the Coordinator will be excluded). An assessment process is described in Exhibit 5 below.

2. *Counsellor's Role in Assisting the Goal-setting Process for the Vision Seeker Treaties*

The program also involves the formal signing of an agreement of commitment — what we call the *Vision Seeker Treaty* — by the participating child, his/her family, the Program staff and the In-school Mentor, and the Chief of the First Nation, which sets out the terms of the child's participation, including:

- ◆ a statement of the child's commitment to completing the program;
- ◆ a statement of the child's overall goals while participating in the program
- ◆ the responsibilities of the parents
- ◆ the responsibilities of the program personnel

It is the Counsellor's role to work with the participant and his/her family during the initial orientation to assist the participant in focussing on the key personal development goals that will be reflected directly or indirectly in the terms of the Vision Seekers Treaty. During the orientation, the Counsellor should also assist the participant's parents or guardians to establish goals that will promote and reinforce the child's efforts to achieve her personal development goals.

It is also the Counsellor's role to encourage the participant to select realistic goals and to consider the attitudes and behaviours that will be necessary if she is going to have a good chance to achieve them.

Exhibit 5: Psychosocial Assessment Form: *Vision Seekers*

**To be Filled in by the Counsellor with the Assistance of the Youth, his/her
Parents/Guardian(s), School Authorities, and Community Health Workers**

FAMILY

D.O.B. _____

Place of Birth _____

Names of family members:

Employment status of Parents:

Degree of parental support for youth's participation in program: High __ Moderate __ Low __

Degree of youth's enthusiasm for participating in the program at outset:

High __ Moderate __ Low __

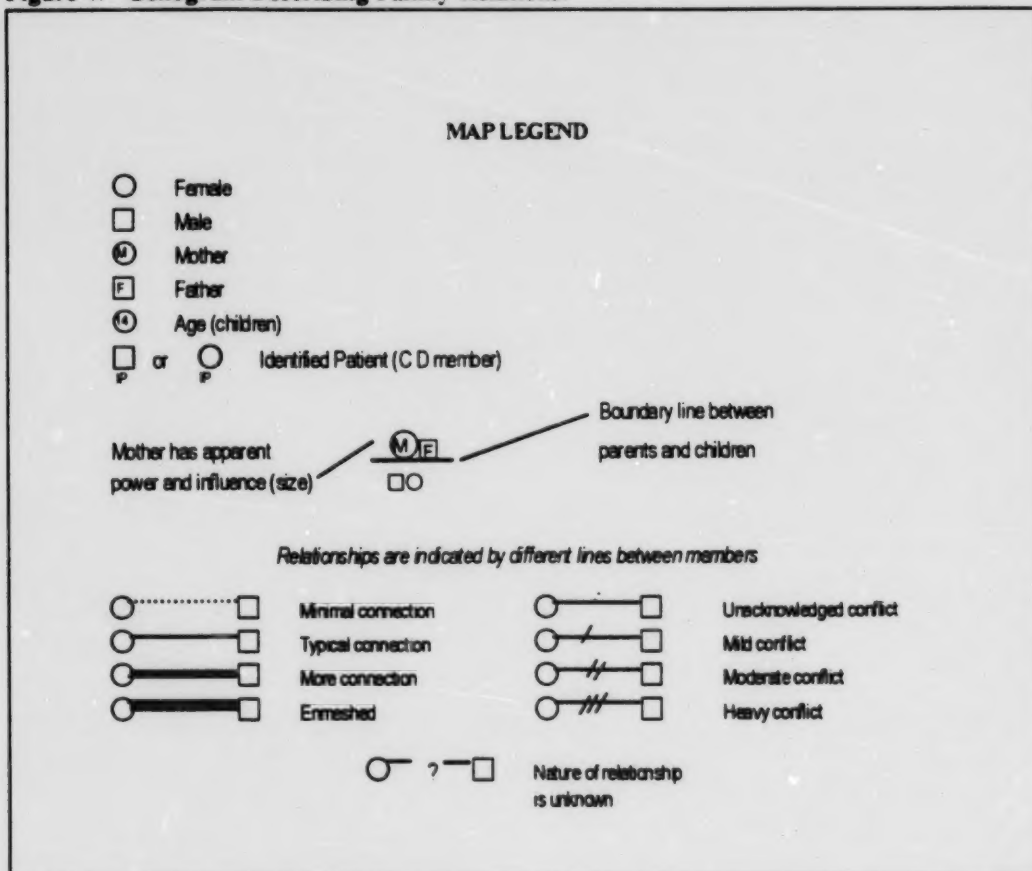
Construct *genogram* on next page, using the symbols described in Figure 4:**SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

- a. Current situation:
- b. Performance trends (i.e., improvement/decline, etc.):
- c. Social behaviour at school:

School-related questions to be asked directly of youth:

1. How many schools have you attended (if the number is high, ask for explanation and explain)?
2. Did your parents prepare you for school?
3. How important is education to your family?
4. What are your personal goals at school?

Figure 4: Genogram Describing Family Relations:



5. What would you like to be when you grow up?

ANTI-SELF/ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

Summary of significant anti-social and self-destructive incidents (as reported by all informants, including youth) in the past 3 years:

Summary/Cont.'d . . .

Summary of HSR indicators (including opinions of informants):

ATHLETIC STRENGTHS/ABILITIES & HOBBY/RECREATIONAL INTERESTS

Identify and list:

Other recreational interests/aptitudes:

MENTAL STATUS ASSESSMENT

Estimate of General Intelligence: Superior ____ Average ____ Low ____

Indication of any psychosis or pre-psychotic traits (depression, bipolar disorder, personality disorder [e.g., extremely manipulative; indicators of lack of conscience] schizophrenia, extreme dissociation, rage/hostile/aggressive expression):

Indicators of outstanding neurotic traits (obsessions, compulsions, irrational fears/phobias):

Indicators of developmental delays:

Indicators of developmental delays:

Indicators of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effect:

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS (i.e., Mobility, Speech or Sensory Limitations)

HISTORY OF ABUSE

Indications of sexual abuse in history:

Indications of physical abuse in history:

Indicators of emotional abuse in history:

INDICATORS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Participant's responses to the question: "Have you ever . . .

- a. tried any drugs? Yes ___ No ___
 - a.1 In the past month? Yes ___ No ___ How often? _____
- b. tried inhalants (sniffed glue or gas)? Yes ___ No ___
 - a.1 In the past month? Yes ___ No ___ How often? _____
- c. had more than 3 drinks of alcohol at one sitting? Yes ___ No ___
 - c.1 In the past month, how often have you been involved in a drinking session? _____
 - c.2 How often did you drink enough that you got drunk? _____

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

To be asked of child:

Who was your first friend? _____

Who are your best friends on the reserve?

Do your friends tend to get in trouble at school?

... with the law?

Do your friends commit crimes (stealing, break and entry, vandalism, assaulting other kids, etc.)?

Are you comfortable around friends who do not commit crimes?

How do you pick your friends? What do you look for in a friend?

In your opinion, are you a leader or a follower?

The objectives of the Treaty negotiation and signing process itself include the following:

1. The process provides a full and unmistakably clear explanation of the purpose of the program and the expectations of each person involved, including the child, the workers, the parents or parent-substitutes and, if practical, the mentors.
2. The commitment of the family and the child to the program are reinforced symbolically.
3. The process establishes rapport between the family and the child and the program personnel.

4. The participation of the Chief is intended to send a signal to the child that not only is the community interested in his or her well-being and success in the program but that the community is *watching* to see that the child meets his or her commitments.

The participation treaty does not occur until the third or fourth week of the after-school program sessions, whenever Stage 3 of the group work sequence is initiated. Stage 3 provides a set of exercises to assist the child with his/her setting of goals.

3. Individual Counselling Sessions

The individual sessions with the child will begin by establishing rapport between counsellor and child; they will then move on to accomplish the following:

- ▶ establishment of a set of small, achievable objectives with the child that will establish a progressive path towards goal achievement (i.e. a personal objective-setting process with the child linked to the Vision Seeker Treaty goals);
- ▶ providing counselling support for the objectives set by the child (including the program goals identified above);
- ▶ providing counselling support for problem-solving issues as they arise.

4. Monthly Counselling Sessions for Parents or Guardians

These sessions will be used to encourage the support of the parent(s) for the child's self-set goals, program goals, as well as to assist the parents with personal difficulties they are having that might prevent appropriate support or that are serving as obstacles to effective parenting. Counsellors must anticipate that regular participation by many parents will not occur and substantial efforts to encourage participation will be essential.

5. Program Referrals

When necessary and with the permission of the parent or guardian, the Counsellor should be willing to accept referrals from the program for specific counselling work with participants.

6. Family Counselling Sessions

The Counsellor should develop and implement a family therapy program for participating families aimed at improving their overall functioning and, thus, indirectly reducing the health and personal development risks for the child. While the program will be developed as part of the project itself, its basic techniques can be briefly described.

When appropriate, the following family therapy techniques might be utilized:

- ◆ **Assessment tools** that will include the use of (a) an *ecomap* (b) a *genogram* (c) *family sculpting* (d) *Picture the Problem* exercises (e) *family drawing*
- ◆ **Facilitative techniques** that will include

Joining

Joining is the process used by a therapist to make a workable (i.e., potentially therapeutic) connection between himself or herself and the family members. It is the process through which the therapist establishes rapport and trust and it rarely comes immediately; it is something that has to be worked on.

The counsellor joins the family by

- showing respect for the family and its individual members
- actively listening
- supporting individual and family strengths
- accommodating the family's values and style
- encouraging the view that their "Vision Seeker" is a special youth and his/her strengths reflect positively on the family
- matching the family's mood, at least initially
- using their words and metaphors
- being empathetic
- expressing genuine concern for the difficulties they have had in parenting
- challenging their restricted view of themselves and their situation

Brief Network Intervention

The use of brief network intervention is especially useful when strong and sudden leverage is needed to budge people out of rigid patterns that are destructive to the Vision Seeker program participant.

With this technique, the Vision Seeker, or the parents on their own, are brought together in a meeting with extended family members, close friends, perhaps band officials in close contact, and Vision Seekers' staff to intervene in a crisis (high risk) situation in order to prevent future or continuing harm. The immediate goal is to prevent an impending negative behaviour by the parents or the youth, such as a case of abuse, the youth running away, engaging in violent or criminal activity, getting involved in unsafe sex, prostitution, heavy drug use or solvent abuse, or potentially committing suicide.

The therapist calls a meeting, informing the participants in advance what the goal for the meeting is. Once everyone is assembled, the family therapist acts as a moderator, beginning by asking each person about his or her involvement with the client or family and his or her own view of the problem situation. The therapist should then clarify the purpose of the meeting, indicating that the goal is to help the family or the youth avoid specific behaviour(s) that will predictably cause harm to the youth or to someone else. Supplementary questions include:

- *How will everyone react if the youth or the parents engage in destructive behaviour?*
- *Why does s/he think the episode or series of behaviours might occur?*
- *Are there some things that can happen to prevent it? What are the different contributions that people could make?*

The therapist maintains the focus of the meeting, coordinates the input of the individuals in attendance, paraphrases peoples comments, clarifies, summarizes and moves the group towards a specific action plan.

Healing Circle Support

The Healing Circle is a network intervention that is ongoing. These circles can only be facilitated with the assistance of Elders. The idea behind the circle is to confront a child, youth or family with behaviour that has proven harmful to self, family members, others or the community as a whole and to collectively explore options, provide advice, and generate a collective commitment to a healing path that has the support of those in attendance.

Task Assignments

This technique involves assigning tasks to a family between sessions in order to introduce new approaches to managing problems and to introduce new experiences into the family's life, to provide information about family patterns and about the possibilities for behavioural and role change, and to keep the family connected to the therapist between sessions.

Enactments

Enactments are conversations during therapy sessions between two or more family members about one of their relevant issues. These interactions provide a safe, structured environment for the members to deal with each other on important topics. They also shift the therapist's communication role from that of a "switchboard" to a less central role in the family's communication. Enactments set up the conditions for a family to do its own work, with the therapist being the guide. They are important tools for conveying the idea that the challenges facing the youth are problems for the whole family and that solutions therefore require some commitment and involvement from the whole family. Enactments give the therapist and the

family a direct opportunity to explore and change communication habits and patterns between and among members.

Segmenting

Segmenting is a technique that divides the family into smaller groups for a particular purpose. A family can be segmented during a therapy session, for example, when a youth or young children are assigned activities in another part of the room. Segmenting is a method of showing how appropriate boundaries should be established between family members when there are inappropriate boundaries or none at all, such as when a youth has taken on too much responsibility and parents have abandoned their responsibilities as parents.

Positive reinforcement through the family system

Positive reinforcement, borrowed from behaviour modification, is a frequently employed technique aimed at strengthening desirable behaviour patterns in the family. Both material reinforcers (such as tokens, stars, points and money) and social reinforcers (such as praise) can be used effectively to accelerate various appropriate behaviours for different family members; combining material and social reinforcers can prove very effective.

Token economies

A token economy is a collective — of *systemic* — strategy for reinforcing solution-oriented behavioural goals. The entire family or a therapy group agrees to undertake specific behavioural changes and establishes a symbolic method (i.e., token distribution system) of reinforcing the system. Similar to money, these tokens should represent specific, measurable values, such as giving or taking away prizes, recreation outings, restaurant meals; they should also include praising, time relieved from normal chore responsibility, or actual material possessions, such as cash.

Alter ego

The "alter ego" technique involves either one family member (or the therapist) talking for another member. This technique is used by the therapist (with the permission of the Vision Seeker and the other family members) to achieve one of the following goals: (1) to prompt the family to deal with an issue that is being avoided (2) to increase the intensity of feelings in the therapy room (3) to explore how one or more family members are thinking or feeling and to gain knowledge of various levels of insight among family members (4) to increase the insight of all family members or (5) to encourage more participation from a silent member.

The therapist begins by saying something like: "This may seem kind of silly at first, but let's give it a try. Be a little patient. I'm going to talk for Bill . . . if that's okay with Bill? I'll stand

behind you while you sit and we'll let your family pretend that you are talking instead of me. If I say anything you disagree with, I'd like you to correct me as we go."

The therapist then stands a couple of feet behind Bill, who is seated, out of direct eye contact with the family. This creates the illusion that Bill, not the therapist, is talking. If you can arrange lighting so that only the people in the circle are "lit," while the person standing out of the circle can hardly be seen (a dark cover with eye holes cut out can be effective too). The therapist and, later, other family members, take on the role of alter ego. This allows conversations to take place which might have been blocked because the individual being "talked to" has been resistant.

The exercise should *begin* in a very non-threatening way, "wading" slowly into more intense material. It is very effective in bringing up feelings and thoughts that have been avoided. It should only be attempted after there is a good deal of rapport and trust established.

Circular Questions

Circular questions are those questions directed to a family member about relationships among and between *other* family members. This technique gives useful information because people often make more objective and insightful observations when they are not directly involved. The therapist asks a family member how s/he sees a problem, then moves about the circle, getting further interpretations of interacting relationships rather than just the interpretations of individuals. Conversations about these different views are encouraged, as are discussions about how the influence of the different attitudes and behaviours impact on the family system as a whole.

Most/least

In the *most/least* technique, each person in the family is instructed to arrange their family in a line according to who is the most worried and the least worried about the problem at hand—and to do it without talking. Then ask:

1. Who's the most worried? least worried?
2. Who is the strictest?
3. Who protects the others most often?
4. Who is the most powerful.

A variation on this is to have the entire family try to arrange itself according to power lines, concern lines, etc.

New Talk

The *new talk* technique involves the family members in conversations that haven't yet occurred but which individual members have wanted to take place. The therapist asks one family member to say something to another member that he or she hasn't said before. The purpose of this technique is to break through to a new level of honest communication in the family. If a significant disclosure is made, it can be explored.

Reframing

The reframing technique can be very effective, both as a learning device and as a problem-solving method. It involves recasting or reinterpreting the problem in terms that the participants have not considered before. There are two types of reframing.

1. *Problem Reframing*, in which the therapist offers a redefinition of a problem that shifts the source of the problem from the individual being focussed on (e.g., the Vision Seeker) to the family system as a whole.

e.g., The statement 'Our child is lazy and won't do what we say,' is reframed to become, "So, the child is not behaving as responsibly as you think he should." The focus then shifts from simply assuming the child must change to a problem in which the parents are at least implicated (the "laziness" was decidedly not the interpretation that the child came up with). The new focus turns to the parents responsibility to teach the boy to behave in specific, trainable ways.

2. *Positive Reframing* is a technique based on the assumption that, potentially, for every negative thought, action or feeling there is, potentially, a positive thought that be found as a replacement.

A positive reframe is not the same as a reflection or interpretation. For example, a youth discloses, "Everybody is blaming me but I think that others had a role in getting me in trouble." A reframe suggests alternative ways of looking at something. It might be suggested that the youth was behaving in a certain way because s/he was trying to get some attention paid to the fact that she was feeling very isolated and left out of things. S/he didn't want to cause any trouble, s/he just needed to work some things out before s/he did some things that were *really* destructive. It was sort of a warning signal to those s/he cared about. It might be suggested to the group that perhaps there were some things about the actions of everyone else that hurt the youth and that this did contribute to his/her negative behaviour.

Some examples:

Statement: "If people would just leave me alone, I'd be all right."

Reframe: "So you like to do your own thinking and to take care of yourself."

Statement: "There's nothing wrong with me. *They* have the problem."

Reframe: "You are looking hard to find exactly where the problem lies."

Statement: "He never listens to me."

Reframe: "It's clear that you want better communications with him."

Relabelling

Relabelling is the use of a neutral or positive word (or words) to replace disparaging labels used by family members to refer to each other. The new label allows the counsellor to refer to and discuss the behaviour in the family without offending any of the members who have been negatively labelled. It also serves to sensitize families to the fact that their use of language is frequently very hurtful.

Guardrail

This technique is particularly useful to promote the capacity of parents to intervene proactively in supporting a positive problem solving strategy for a youth whose behaviour is forceful and destructive and seemingly beyond the capacity of the parents to deal with. Guardrail brings both parents or a parent and an older sibling together as a team to react to a child's alcohol, drug, or antisocial behaviour problem. The following steps adequately describe the technique:

Introductory Comments to Parents: "When you join together, support each other, and continue to work as a team, it sets up clear limits on what your child can get away with. It's like a strong guardrail along a tall bridge that you're crossing in a car. You hope never to touch it (the rail) or even go near it, but it's comforting to have it there. Generally, children want structure and limits, even when their behaviour appears otherwise. Just like you know that guardrail will keep you from going over the side, even if there's an accident."

Further Instructions: "To make this point, I want to ask you to do something. Join hands. To make the bond even stronger, move your hands up each other's arms and clasp the other's forearm" (Illustrate the technique by clasping your forearms with opposite hands).

While the parents are Joined, Say: "This is the kind of mutual support you will need from each other to set clear limits for your child. One of you may temporarily weaken, but as long as the other is holding firm, the guardrail is in place. While you are joined this way your child sees his or her boundaries and limits. Your child knows that if he or she goes beyond the limits you have set, you will take action together."

To the Youth: "To get an idea of the strength of the guard rail, push on it" (When s/he has pushed, the guardrail is still in place, even though it gave a little). Now say: "The guardrail is flexible, isn't it, but it's also strong and solid. That's the kind of rules and limits that are going to be in place from your family and the Vision Seekers program. And it's not to fight with you or crimp your style. It's just to know that we care about your safety and you can rely upon the people who care, just like that guardrail on a bridge."

Note: The exercise illustrates and underscores the parents' togetherness and teamwork in setting limits for the youth. You should then make the rules that make up the guardrail very clear.

6. *Assisting with Group Work in the After-school Program*

While it is hoped that the Program Director will be the primary group worker, in some instances, it will be important to have a highly trained counsellor involved in the group work process. Exercises such as those involving family sculpting would benefit from having a counsellor on hand, both to assist in the facilitation and to recognize the need for some referrals.

9.2 SUMMARY

Counselling services are a fundamental component of the overall Vision Seekers risk-reduction strategy. Counsellors can be accessed through various sources. It is critical that they are familiar with the special issues and cultural realities of the first peoples they are serving. The person(s) selected should be closely linked to the program, with his/her work schedule integrated formally into responsibilities for Vision Seekers. The Counsellor should not only provide counselling services but should serve as an advisor and, to some extent, a mentor to the program staff.

The counselling approach employed should be based on research-based, effective counselling techniques. An overview of the sequence of the counselling process has been provided, and the actual role and approach of the counsellor in the program has been described. The counsellor should be involved in the initial assessment process and s/he should also assist with the participant's goal-development and goal-achievement strategy. Counselling formats should include individual counselling sessions on a regular basis, special program referrals, sessions with the family and, at times with the group. The Counsellor may find family therapy techniques particularly useful.

10.0 THE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

The *After School Program* is the heart of the overall body of the Vision Seekers' strategy. It consumes the most time and it places the children in more structured contact with the program staff and other participants.

The after school program is the place where the most fundamental challenges that the child will experience are set, worked through, and monitored; it is also where participants are given the greatest organized primary support for achieving their goals.

The after school program is also the locus of the group bonding and staff/child bonding that should take place as a routine part of program participation—a key element of the program in that it promotes interpersonal "attachment." As stated above, a lack of attachment has been identified in the primary and secondary intervention literature as a serious health and social risk factor for children and youth.

Managed and facilitated by the Program Director (or Coordinator) and his/her assistant—who would typically be responsible for organizing the recreational elements of the strategy—this program component would typically utilize a gymnasium, recreation centre or band hall to provide a daily after-school activity program for 12-14 year olds at high risk of being drawn into dangerous and potentially long-term, substance-abusing, self-destructive and/or anti-social behaviour patterns.

The after school program is intended to psychologically and socially inoculate the participants with a capacity to avoid and resist high social risk situations and to acquire alternative, constructive thinking and social interaction styles. This is achieved through systematic exposure of the participants to pro-social and constructive personal development experiences, reinforced by the influence of a part-time, therapeutic community of caring adults and peers.

Key elements of the after-school program include role-modelling, goal-setting, therapeutic group work, personal challenges and group project work. The fundamental goal is to lower the risk that participants will adopt behaviour patterns that will, predictably, cancel out their future opportunities to take advantage of education programs, desirable employment opportunities, qualitative family life, and constructive recreation.

The after school component, like the program as a whole, unites participating at-risk children, their parents and grandparents or substitute care-givers, community Elders, a Program Director and assistant(s), a mental health counsellor/therapist, and School Mentors in facilitating four areas of self-development. It centres on a social group work program organized around personal self-exploration and skill development in the areas of personal judgement, moral development, interpersonal communications and problem-solving. It is constructed around the creation of a set of short- and long-term goals and associated challenges.

These "challenges" take the form of both personal skill/aptitude/knowledge acquisition and the skills of co-operation acquired through carrying out tasks and having outings as a team of peers. It also encourages public-mindedness and altruism by involving the participants in

a community service assignment.

The program should operate from three to five (school) days a week, from immediately after school until the supper hour or, if local circumstances dictate, from after supper (approximately 6:30 p.m.) until no later than 9:00 p.m. (*Note:* If the program is carried out after school, doing homework should be a fundamental aspect of the schedule—and, if possible, tutorial assistance might be built into this aspect of the program).

Along with other locally determined components, the after-school program should involve the following core program elements:

- a goal-setting process that would begin with an identification of the child's aptitudes, interests and aspirations and then, in consultation with the child and his parent(s), the setting of
 1. a personal development goal (social skills and/or cognitive skills);
 2. an academic goal
 3. a recreation/hobby skill development goal
 4. a community service goal;
- personalized support for achieving these goals from the program director, participating peer group and mentors, and, to whatever extent possible, parents;
- participation in an ongoing, facilitated social group work program;
- *Kid-Rap*: A twice a week problem-solving session dealing with individual problems and generalizing those problems as common experiences in order to learn coping skills that are transferable to different situations;
- referrals for individual or family counselling (in addition to the regular counselling sessions);
- group seminars and guest speakers in various topics of relevance to personal development;
- a recreation and physical activity program;
- planning and ongoing support for a community service project;
- planning for a summer camp experience.

10.1 THE GROUP WORK STRATEGY: THE CORE METHODOLOGY

The core methodology for intervening in the emerging, dysfunctional life process of the adolescents in the Vision Seekers program derives from social group work. Social group work is one of the traditional core methodologies of social work intervention with individuals characterized by social skill deficits or faced with personal adjustment problems that they cannot solve on their own. For adolescents to become socially skilful and mentally healthy adults, they must, consciously or unconsciously, achieve certain goals. In healthy, highly supportive families directed by parents providing wise and caring guidance, these goals are set through a gradual process of nurture and guidance from parents and experimentation by youth, coupled with a dialogue between parents and youth.

If such advantageous parent support is not available, an individual must consciously seek out experiences during their youth that will assist them in dealing with major maturational challenges. Such experiences include the following (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989):

1. The experience of being a valued member of a constructive group.
2. The process of learning to form close and enduring relationships.
3. Experiences which result in the acquisition of a sense of worth as a person with unique qualities.
4. Learning experiences that enable the achievement of a valid and reliable basis for making informed choices.
5. Processes that empower resistance to bad advice from parents and peers.
6. Processes that teach one to use available support systems.

The youth must also:

7. experience processes that allow her/him to express constructive curiosity and exploratory behaviour;
8. find ways to be useful to others; and come to believe that they personally have a promising future containing real opportunities.

10.1.1 - THE LIMIT AND LEAD STRATEGY

The basic group work strategy for intervening with at-risk adolescents through the Vision Seekers program can be called the "limit and lead" technique. The reference to "limit" refers to putting limits on behaviours that are harmful and "lead" refers to teaching youths alternatives that are *not* harmful (Ferrara, 1992).

Defining Core Terms

a. Limit

Before an adolescent with antisocial and/or self-destructive behavioural tendencies can learn to acquire new ways of behaving, the old ways of meeting his/her needs must be *unlearned*. The Vision Seekers Director or Coordinator(s) or a specialized group worker consciously works towards reducing the probability that the adolescent participants in the after-school program will continue to satisfy needs through reckless, self-destructive behaviour or by exploiting or in other ways hurting others. As long as those opportunities remain available, there will be little impetus for the troubled adolescent to explore new ways of coping.

Typically, high social risk children have not been provided with a clearly defined set of boundaries regarding what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. They are often dealt with in inconsistent ways. Frequently, the discipline they experience can be likened to a "see saw" of extreme parental control imposed without regard to the child's feelings in one instance and then virtually no control — i.e., and, often, no supervision — with the child left to set his own limits. This lack of limits sets the young adolescent on a persistent course of testing the limits of others, especially authority figures, often to establish not only a sense of order but to determine the extent to which others may actually care for him or her. Fortunately, by virtue of the psycho-social characteristics of adolescent personal development, in the early teen years, most adolescents, even troubled ones, are exceptionally adaptable and, hence, s/he can still *learn* to submit to limits: In short, s/he can be *resocialized*.

Limits must be established for each troubled adolescent in order that new behaviours can develop. Ferrara identifies the following guidelines for setting limits:

1. *Target Behaviour.* Limits should not be all-encompassing; they should be specific and only imposed for hurtful or exploitative behaviour. The Group Worker or Coordinator must clearly define what those limits are.
2. *Clear Limits.* To maximize the effectiveness of limit-setting, the limits should be simple and clearly communicated. *The youth must be able to explain the limits in his/her own words.*
3. *Consistent and Firm Limits.* Rules need not be rigidly enforced but exceptions should be rare: The important thing is to consistently enforce some sanctions against violating the limits set. If the consistency breaks down manipulative behaviour is encouraged and this type of behaviour undermines the very purpose of Vision Seekers. Such behaviour also tends to destabilize the group because respect for the fairness of the group process is lost, as is the respect for the group facilitator (who is then seen as weak or "wishy-washy"). If a limit is set or a consequence is given, it must be followed through. A consequence that cannot be delivered should never be threatened.
4. *Fair limits.* When setting limits, sensitivity to the individual characteristics of the participant is essential. The youth's individual strengths and weaknesses must be considered—and by carefully setting limits, making exceptions to them can be avoided.

b. Lead

The process of *leading* essentially involves teaching the adolescent what to do *instead* of being irresponsible or self-destructive. Setting limits is not sufficient on its own. The principle of reciprocity should prevail: If you take something away, you must give something back in return. It should be remembered that human beings tend to develop their various patterns of behaviour and thinking in order to survive, to cope and even to get their pleasures from life. There may be far better ways for them to do all of these things but in their own micro-world, their thought patterns and social skills have empowered them sufficiently well to "make it" to this point in their lives. So if Vision Seekers' staff are going to be successful in encouraging program participants to abandon their patterned ways of thinking or behaving they must help them replace those patterns.

The goal of Vision Seekers is not to strip the youth of power and autonomy; it is to help him to redirect his life journey according to a vision of a healthy, happy personal and social future.—and to help him acquire effective strategies for realizing that vision.

Relishing the 'Little Victories'

Children at high social risk tend to have poor social skills and, in their everyday circumstances, it is difficult for them to acquire and use pro-social behaviour. Further, HSR adolescents tend to have trouble learning new behaviours. It has to be expected that the process of learning new behaviours will be a slow one, often frustrating for the staff. The process will involve many small steps and the staff must learn to orient themselves to that fact and to set their expectations accordingly—not to compromise long-term expectations but to orient them to the little victories along the path.

Relishing these small victories makes the job not only bearable but enjoyable. Being satisfied with the accomplishment of small steps, successfully taken, is an antidote to the many frustrations that come with the rudeness, hostility, resistance and various defensive and conflictual behaviours that are inevitably part and parcel of the troubled adolescent's repertoire.

The following guidelines, directed to staff, will help in selecting the "leads" that are appropriate:

1. Use *positive feedback* when you are trying to influence behaviour and avoid negative feedback, whenever possible (and it is not always possible). Positive feedback is simply more effective in reshaping behaviours than is negative feedback. Frequent and judicious use of praises (i.e., not *overpraising*) is the group worker's most available and most useful form of positive feedback.
2. *Modelling*. Remember that you (the group worker) have enormous potential for positively (or negatively) influencing young adolescents, depending on your presentation of self. Your ongoing behaviour is perhaps the most powerful tool for positively influencing the group—if it is sensitive, fair and consistent, as well as firm and determined

in matching the goals you set with your actions. If it is inconsistent, unfair or weak, it gives the wrong signals and does not promote group or individual growth. Not only is your general demeanour, consistency and fairness important and influential, so are the specific ways you handle rule violations that warrant the meting out of discipline. In the heat of an intervention for a rule violation, it is important that you do not "lose your cool" or violate the principles that you are trying to model for the participants.

3. *Shaping the Goals.* It is also important that you try to break down the goals set for your participants into component parts. There is rarely such a thing as a goal with a single, irreducible dimension to it: Almost *all* goals have smaller parts! Every time a youth makes an appropriate step or achieves part of a larger goal, the action should be reinforced. It becomes the role of staff to "find Johnny or Jane doing something good," then give him/her praise or some other type of reward. Reinforcement of this kind is extremely important.
4. *Prompt and Fade.* Again in the language of the behaviourists, it is also important to *show* a youth how to achieve a goal, which is to say show him/her how to act or express in ways that cumulatively add up to goal achievement. Initially, the prompting is very explicit, such as having the adolescent repeat something positive after you have made a statement. Over a period of time, the prompt becomes less explicit. To illustrate, the group worker would not have the youth repeat an explicit statement but express the gist of something expected. Gradually, the explicitness of the prompting action fades and the behaviour diminishes. It is eventually eliminated completely as the new behaviour pattern or thinking pattern is incorporated into the normal repertoire of the child's responses.

10.1.2 - INTERVENING BY LEADING AND SETTING LIMITS

Based on the work of Ferrara (1992) and derivative from the standard principles of guided group interaction, the interventions described below are conceived of as lying along a continuum of limit and lead. Lead interventions are used when the group is capable of problem-solving and limit interventions are used when the group is negative or out of control. The needs of the group at a particular time determine the interventions used. The descriptions are directly addressed to the individual who will be using them.

Minimal Leads

1. *Approval* is designed to reassure a youth. Approvals reinforce existing thoughts, behaviours, or feelings. Make sure that you don't use it when a negative behaviour is presented. If you do, that behaviour will be reinforced. Examples of statements that indicate approval are: "I agree with you!" "Right on!" "You're right on!" Gestures include a nod of approval or a pat on the back.
2. *Delay.* The group will tend to look to the facilitator to guide the group process. Thus, a noncommittal response or no response at all is a negative indicator of approval. It

forces the group to continue talking or continuing to do what they were previously doing. An example of a delay is silence. Again, you must be cautious: A delay *may* be taken as a signal of approval.

3. *Closed Question*: A closed question is a question that calls for a yes or a no answer. The closed question is usually used simply to make a point or to redirect the discussion, e.g., "Are we discussing what's really important to us right now?"

Moderate Lead

1. *Reflection*: Reflection is restatement of an utterance by a youth. It demonstrates understanding and may imply approval. It can be used selectively to direct conversations and to emphasize the content of a statement, an underlying feeling or a behaviour. A reflection might be: "What I think you mean is that Jane deserved to be threatened because she teased you."
2. *Paraphrase*: A paraphrase is an extension of a reflection and it is used to further draw out the underlying understanding and explanation a participant has for engaging in inappropriate behaviour. The facilitator repeats in clear, perhaps simpler terms, the statement of the participant, e.g., "What I hear you saying is that you think Jane deserved to be threatened. You think that the way she acted indicated that she wanted you to get mad at her."
3. *Clarification*: The group worker uses his/her own words to summarize an entire discussion and then to sum up its essence with a statement of a common theme or group concern, e.g., "The group has touched on quite a few topics, but the one concern in common is that members aren't real sure when they should retaliate against someone whose behaviour or words makes you hurt or angry."
4. *Focussing*: Focussing the discussion on a topic that the group worker thinks would be fruitful to explore is used when the discussion wanders aimlessly. Especially in the early stages of group problem-solving, group members will often wander over numerous topics, sometimes in circular fashion. Occasionally, the group worker's leads have encouraged this wandering but, sometimes, if it goes on for too long, it simply gets confusing—and boring, making the group members restless or annoyed. When the group worker/facilitator thinks the group members have generally explored their main topics of concern, s/he should stop the group and ask participants to focus on one aspect of the discussion. Focussing helps to give structure and intensity to the discussion; it also helps the group members (or member, if the group has centred its process work on a single individual) to emphasize a single feeling or idea and thus get in touch with their memory and knowledge of it and the emotional associations with the object or situation being singled out. Some illustrations of focussing leads are: "Please elaborate more specifically on those feelings about your brother." "Could you choose one word to describe the last five minutes talk." "Let's not talk for a while. I suggest that you close your eyes and try to get in touch with what you are feeling."

5. *General Exploratory Questions*: You might also use an open-ended but probing question designed to focus a youth's attention on the type of concerns that are most troubling to him. Such questions push the youth towards emotionally significant exploration and away from rambling discussions or superficial conversation. The type of questions that leave participants to explore and take the group discussion where they wish is what we have in mind, *not* the type of question that is answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Useful examples of exploratory questions include: "What do you mean by 'failure'?" "Do you generally get along with your parents?" "Do you usually have a positive experience when you spend time with your grandparents? What makes it positive?"
6. *Focussed Questions*: You might also use questions that point that group or individual member at a particular issue, e.g., "Why don't you tell us about other time that you've felt that someone has caused you to retaliate?" or "Please elaborate more specifically on those feelings about your father?" or "You've been discussing many topics the last few minutes. Could you pick the most important one to you and tell us a little more about it?" or "We've been talking about words, words, words, but I haven't detected much feeling yet; could you name a feeling you have right now?"

Moderate Limit

1. *Developing Alternatives*: Presenting a group member or the group as a whole with alternatives to a negative behaviour provides illustrations of a set of parameters within which acceptable behaviours are defined; in this sense, providing alternative courses of action is an indirect way of establishing limits through illustration. In essence, the range of acceptable behaviours places a boundary between what is acceptable and the old unacceptable or destructive behaviour.
2. *Redirection*: This involves refocusing the group to maintain a problem-solving approach or pro-social values, e.g., "I think we've strayed from the topic. Let's get back to the issue of respect for Elders." Or, "We seem to be scapegoating Billie. Shouldn't we instead be talking about how *all* of us treat Elders?"
3. *Labelling*: This involves pointing out positive social behaviour or verbal expressions of constructive thinking processes. This is used to reorient a youth's belief system, e.g., "Exploiting others Mary, is *always* irresponsible."

Strong Limit

1. *Confrontation*: Confrontation involves describing an aspect of a youth's behaviour that s/he would like to deny or verbalizing an aspect of the youth's behaviour that has a negative impact on others (and spelling out the nature of that impact), e.g., "Your constant talking and laughing is very distracting for the group, making the whole group process very difficult to keep going."

2. *Describing and Sharing Feelings*: Sharing personal feelings about a group member's obstructive behaviour or lack of progress is a relatively strong intervention but it is sometimes very relieving for the group worker. More to the point, however, such sharing of emotions not only helps to clarify how the group worker feels but it serves as a model for assertiveness to the group members. Some examples are: "I feel angry when you talk so much about wanting to hurt other people and not giving a damn about them." Or "Your going on and on like that is a bit of a bore; it makes me sleepy." The limit may also be indirect, expressed in positive form, "It makes me feel good when you talk about yourself that way."
3. *Interpretation*: This involves an attempt to hypothesize what the resistant youth's motivations are for being obstructive or refusing to progress on his/her goal track. Interpretations are very powerful and a child should not be overwhelmed by too many of them. Once is probably enough in any given session.
4. *Expulsion*: A participant who won't respond to the limit setting must be expelled from the session for that day. Any youth expelled from the group must also receive negative consequences. The group worker/facilitator should meet with the youth who was expelled and try to resolve any conflicts prior to the next group session.

Feedback

The term *feedback* is borrowed from electronics and physics; it describes a process in which information is fed back into a system so that corrections can be made. The main guidelines for giving feedback are as follows:

- ☐ Give opinions in the form of feedback *only when participants are ready*. Typically, this means when they have asked for it verbally or when their behaviour is so challenging that they are essentially signalling a need for structure, discipline or special attention. Vulnerable situations and vulnerable personalities should be handled far more delicately.
- ☐ *Describe an undesirable behaviour first* before giving your reaction to it.
- ☐ Give feedback in the form of *opinions about the behaviour* rather than judgements about the person.
- ☐ Only give feedback about the *things that participants can* (have the capacity to) *change*.
- ☐ Only give feedback *in small amounts* so that participants can experience the full impact of the group worker's reaction. Too many items may overload them, creating possible resentment and confusion and, essentially, cancelling out any potential for change in response to the feedback.
- ☐ Feedback should be a *prompt and specific response* to current and specific behaviours, not unfinished emotional business from the past. Being told that one is "too aggressive" is not as effective as saying, "You pushed your idea so hard that you seemed not to hear other suggestions and everybody seemed to react to being pushed so they decided against

your suggestion."

- ☐ Ask the participant(s) for *reactions* to your feedback. Ask if it was helpful or not.

10.1.3- ENLISTING THE GROUP IN PROCESS MAINTENANCE AND INTERVENTIONS

One of the greatest advantages of social group work is the exceptional influence that the group itself can have on the personal development of the members. This is particularly true for teens, who are so heavily influenced by their peers. Specific techniques for encouraging group involvement or for enlisting their active support include:

1. *Redirection*: The purpose of the group is to learn how to problem-solve and the method of the learning process is essentially one of problem-solving. Even when functioning at their very best, people have a tendency to avoid problems and are easily sidetracked when they see one coming. A key function of the group worker is to keep the group on topic. Redirection amounts to asking the group to talk about something that they are consciously or unconsciously trying to avoid. Some examples are:

"The discussion is focussing on Alan's tendency to lie. I thought our real concern at this point was the fact that he has been stealing, not that he tends to lie about it."

"When Mary brought out her problem, she admitted she hated her home room teacher. Shouldn't we talk about that."

"The group has been talking a lot about sports and fun things lately. Shouldn't we get back to talking about how each of us should develop some hobbies that will help us have a lifetime of good exercise and fun."

2. *Comments about the Group Process*: The group worker should avoid becoming a discussion participant but, rather, when the group process does not seem to be productive s/he should attempt to determine why. This should be done by directing the group to address the problem. For example, if the discussion seems to be superficial, the group worker might suggest that the problems under discussion are being minimized. The group should be asked to determine why such trivialization is occurring.
3. *Challenging the Individual*: Many troubled adolescents are oriented towards avoiding responsibility and this creates a significant, ongoing challenge for the group worker, who must maintain a directed or at least productive group process in place. Often the challenge comes in the form of trivial questions about program rules or contents. It also comes in the form of challenges to the group worker. The intention is to make the group worker defensive, thus enabling the adolescents to escape the change process. Whether the attack is subtle or overt, the group worker should enlist the assistance of the group in averting the challenge. For example:

"Tommy wants to know why he can't swear during the group. Does anyone want to explain it to him?"

"Janet is calling me 'mean' and 'unfair.' Can anyone help her state a question in a way that

allows me to address the problem directly?"

10.1.4 - THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL IN GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Sociologists and anthropologists have long made the observation that ritual plays an important function in maintaining the solidarity of a group, community or society. Group workers have emphasized a similar view, stating that increasing the level of group distinctiveness can lead to greater cohesion among group members and that ritual can play an important role in defining that distinctiveness (Kavenagh, 1973; Malekoff, 1997). Military officials and team sport coaches have long known this intuitively. In Vision Seekers, ritual is highly recommended as a group-promoting device. The Circle Greeting exercise in Volume 2, the Treaty-signing process, the blessing of the Elder, and the Vision Quest are all examples of ritual being incorporated into the suggested programme. Some other rituals that you may want to consider include:

- ☐ **Graffiti Wall.** In the Vision Seekers' meeting place, line a part of the walls with newsprint and make plenty of crayons available. Encourage the participants to write anything they want at any time but recommend that it reflect their personal progress toward their goals, the group's progress as a whole, or their personal highs, lows, complaints and satisfactions with the staff. Also encourage the writing to occur just before and just after the session, thus making it a kind of ritual. The wall becomes a sort of record of the progress of the group and the facilitator can make mention of it as a reference point for group discussion.
- ☐ **Pledge.** As the group progresses towards its goals, the participants may be willing to make specific commitments to themselves, their fellow Vision Seekers, or to the community. The pledges could add up to become the commitments of Vision Seekers '99, for example. Don't trivialize the pledging process by allowing participants to make promises they can't keep. Once the pledge has been made, it should be repeated ritually, on regular occasions (once a month or at the beginning or ending of each meeting).
- ☐ **Any Last Words?** Having a statement of last words that summarize the content of each session provides a way of saying goodbye to each other from the session, as well as adding some humour or wisdom to the flow of the group process. The facilitator should simply ask: "Any last words that summarize how you feel about tonight's session?" and wait for the replies. The replies should be recorded and maintained in a file, thus allowing for a later examination as part of a "looking back" process.

10.1.5 - TAKING LEAVE, MOVING ON AND REFLECTING BACK

Endings and transitions in adolescent groups should not be left unattended. Typically, members of Vision Seekers' groups will have already experienced far too many unceremonious separations and experienced unexplained abandonment and the deep pain of rejection. Relationships with loved ones are often of the revolving door kind, with little of

meaning that marks such departures or entries. As any group of adolescents approaches the final stage of their time together in the program, members move through a natural process of separation. The group experience itself, once completed, can be a major loss.

As the group moves into the final phase of their time together, Vision Seekers staff will themselves feel an admixture of concern and relief—relief stemming from the challenges of getting the children through the program and the satisfaction of observing their progress and concern about the future of the children, all of whom have become very well known to the staff and all of whom have absorbed a considerable emotional investment from staff. There is also concern on the part of staff that their optimism is unwarranted and that the children remain at extremely high social risk.

10.1.6 - COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK DYNAMICS

The basic model for organizing a group work program such as the one that is the core of Vision Seekers is one which is tied to the “natural life” of groups in general. Called the “Boston model” of group development, it was first formulated by three researchers/social group workers who based their work on observations of clinical practice and examination of records of purposefully organized, young, adolescent groups. The model consists of the following five stages:

1. The *Preaffiliation* Stage

During the first stage of group development, the establishment of trust is the primary characteristic and goal of the group worker. The staff provide structure and safety in the group, and make clear what the purpose is and that the participants are welcome. With troubled adolescents, this first stage can be the most difficult, because so many of the participants actively distrust any formal program targeted on changing their attitudes and behaviours.

2. The *Power and Control* Stage

The fact that the program offers a structure and a set of rules and principles means that while participants have hung in long enough to develop some basic trust in the group or the staff, they will inevitably want to challenge the rules and principles and see if they can change them to their own advantage. Participants who have tended to lack structure and to play fairly loose with rules can rarely resist challenging the “establishment” once they decide that they are going to stay. They are going to want to challenge the rules and staff authority, as well as the “pecking order” briefly established in the group. At this stage, the greatest number of drop-outs usually occur. To contain this tendency to flight, the staff must work pro-actively, projecting optimism, providing a vision of success and attempting to make the environment comfortable for the learners. A key factor in raising the comfort level for the majority in the program is to attempt to dissuade from their mischief those who are actively disruptive, and to console those who are not disruptive.

One of the things that, of itself, tends to make the program attractive is the beginning of

discussions about subjects that lie outside the range of normal discussions in school and other organized settings. In this middle stage of social group work development, the members move from the known to the unknown and they sense the possibility of greater closeness and intimacy, yet, typically armed with a tough outer shell of defences that makes them reluctant to open up to others except on their own clearly defined terms, the group members remain sceptical and unsure about whether they should surrender much of themselves to the group process.

3. The *Intimacy Stage*

At the intimacy stage, the members draw closer to one another and to the situation; they begin to relate, in group, as if they were in a family-like gathering—a *real* family that is, “with all its warts and zits.” This stage is characterized by mutual self-disclosure and continued testing of the norms. Members enter into a rivalry for the group worker’s attentions, somewhat like sibling rivalry. Youth whose family dynamics are chaotic will be tempted to complicate the group process, almost as a projection of the dysfunction in their own families, and this process is very trying for staff. The focus of the group worker is to clarify positive and negative feelings and to enlist the group’s support in reinforcing the positive.

4. The *Differentiation Stage*

When the group moves into the differentiation stage, the group members begin to work together more easily, supporting one another and more freely expressing their thoughts and feelings. Staff have to contend with fewer power-testing problems at this stage. The members take on a more organic sense of the group. The focus of the worker is to help the group “run itself” and to facilitate the group’s evaluation of its own problem-solving and mutual support work.

By this stage, the group has developed a fairly clear sense of group identity.

5. The *Separation Stage*

The separation stage brings with it a set of social dynamics that tend to focus on indirect or disguised resistance to a further experience of loss in the lives of the youth. Early termination, regressive behaviours, and reawakened feelings of past losses characterize this phase. This final stage can be heartbreaking because, after many months of positive development, there is considerable risk that the benefits gained and, indeed, the survival of the group through its final stage, will all be lost. This possibility is of sufficient concern that these issues are addressed separately below.

10.1.7 - THE DYNAMICS OF THE GROUP DURING THE 'SEPARATION STAGE'

As the end of the program cycle draws near, the participants do unconsciously begin to prepare for separation: They can be expected to attend irregularly, develop new attachments outside of the group that begin to take precedence over their ties to Vision Seekers. The following behaviours can be expected:

- *Resistance through Regressive Behaviour.* A variety of group resistances to the termination of involvement in the program can be expected. According to one observer, this may take the form of "exaggerated problems, lateness, absenteeism, subgrouping, helplessness, excessive pairing, splitting, denial, and generally, an overall increase in acting-out behaviours inside and outside the group" (Hurley, 1984: 77).
- *Sudden Termination.* To avoid the pain of program termination, some members will suddenly quit coming, unannounced. It is as if they are attempting to avoid the pain of another major loss. Close work with both the participants — especially those with a history of abandonment in their backgrounds — and their families should be carried out if multiple early departures are going to be avoided.
- *Exclusion of Staff.* The group work coordinator can expect a period of exclusion from most of the discussion taking place in the main group work sessions, as if the coordinator is being punished for abandoning the group—in fact, as if s/he had already left the group (Malekoff, 1997:167).
- *Rekindled Dependency Needs.* Some participants will also begin to display greater dependence on the Coordinator, "hanging around" her or him as they had never done in the earlier stages of the program.

To reduce the pain of program termination, the end of the program should be talked about from the outset. It should become a significant topic of group meetings in the last two months of the program. Further, the transition through different stages should be marked by ceremonies, such as suppers with parents that offer Certificates of Progress to participants. These events can be viewed as preparatory functions, readying Vision Seekers for the final ending of the program after the second camp experience.

The Counsellor and staff can also help the members to reestablish connections outside of the group. Controlled regression — allowing some repeat of earlier, negative behaviours — and revisiting and analyzing the causes and consequences of those behaviours can be very useful at this stage.

At least two weeks before the final (second) summer camp experience, which includes the Vision Quest, group members should be provided with the opportunity to reflect back on their experience in the program and to evaluate the benefits of that experience—and the strengths and weaknesses of the program, in terms of its meeting their needs. The information provided through this exchange can be very useful to program review and revision processes. The youth should talk to both the individual counsellor and the group as a whole.

Part of the completion process should involve the participant saying goodbye to anyone involved as a client in a community service project.

The Vision Quest experience is particularly vital to the satisfactory completion of the program. It is discussed below.

10.1.8 - FOLLOW-UP

Part of the program's commitment to providing meaningful, structured support for participants involves the following:

- a. with each client, developing a plan of action for program completion through the setting of goals and preparation of an agenda of activities designed to help the individual achieve the goals;
- b. continuing post-group support for the individual and the family, which may take the form of a periodic "check-up," as well as some assistance in accessing resources.

10.2 THE AFTER SCHOOL 'CURRICULUM'

It is probably useful to view the underlying themes around which the after-school program component is organized as developing out of a formal curriculum. While we anticipate considerable variation in how each theme is actually implemented in the different communities and cultures that adopt the program, certain basic exercises and activities are strongly recommended as the core learning components of the after-school program. It should also be recognized that these exercises are examples of the type of activity that can be effective in dealing with various stages of group development and structured social learning. Experienced group workers will be aware of a variety of other exercises that can serve as substitutes.

The exercises outlined in Volume 2 are intended to give a sense of how each stage might be constructed and how they might fit into the overall learning sequence. Thematically, the learning activity sequence builds from a process of interpersonal familiarization, establishing a foundation of trust and teaching group participation skills and orienting learners to the program. It then moves through goal-setting, generalized cognitive and social skill development exercises and on to some key issues in the lives of participants. It concludes by providing an outline of how the community service project might be organized.

The use of alternative exercises are encouraged, especially by those who have a good knowledge of similar exercises with a special cultural or local dimension—and by skilled group workers who are more comfortable developing or adapting learning exercises to fit the specific personal and group needs of the Vision Seekers they are working with. Substitutions lacking any rationale are discouraged, however, for the exercises do have a purposeful relationship with one another and with the basic program concept as a whole.

As indicated, the curriculum can best be described as a sequence. However, it should be noted that the actual logistics of program implementation will demand various degrees of overlap between each stage of the sequence. The realities of each situation will dictate the extent to which program staff can (or must) simply follow the guidelines and materials presented in Volume 1 and 2 or adapt them to fit distinctive local needs.

Stage 1: Orientation: The youth recruited to the program, having gone through the preliminary recruitment process described above, will meet with the staff and other participants as a group for the first time on the first or second day of school.

At the outset a respected Elder should be asked to say a prayer and bless the program. To clearly signal the community leadership's commitment to the program, it would be valuable to have the Chief in attendance, lending his or her support. Having a popular personality on hand would also be valuable—a person who is acceptable as a role model. This can serve as a further display of community commitment to the program as well as serving to reinforce the participant's own commitment to the program. A member of the community who is especially well respected by the youth or a well-known First Nations' personage might formally salute the program and encourage the participants to "get into it in a serious way."

An exercise referred to as *Circle Greetings* is included to initiate the group process. The initial meeting should end with a blessing of the group by an Elder as well as words of encouragement to participants to participate actively and cooperatively in the program.

The program staff should then make brief introductions to the program and then use an ICEBREAKER (as provided in Volume 2) to "loosen up." The exercises also help each participant give a good introduction to themselves, allowing them opportunities to begin to share some important personal information with each other.

Exercises are also included that are intended to encourage participants to share some fairly personal information and feelings with the group. This represents the beginning stage of trust development—an essential ingredient of the program and one that is worked on more intensely in Stage 2. The establishment of trustworthy relations between participants and between participants and the staff is obviously vital to the process and outcomes of the program as a whole. However, at this stage, considerable resistance to opening up emotionally is almost inevitable.

Stage 1 should not extend more than a week and a half (7.5 after school sessions) and the exercises included in it may be better suited to only 3-5 sessions of formal group meetings. *The fun and recreational aspects of the program should consume most of the time for the first week or two.*

Stage 2: Trust Building

The next set of exercises are focussed on further promoting and reinforcing trust between the

participants and between the participants and staff. It is obviously important to work creatively and intensely on this process for it is the "cement" that binds the interpersonal dynamics that serve as the engine of the program. For this reason, some preliminary exercises were provided in the Stage 1 set of Volume 2 and additional exercises included in Stage 2.

Various local leaders should be asked to come to speak briefly to the participants, essentially to encourage their committed participation and to make the entire program seem important to the children.

The next phase involves general group discussions regarding the personal development needs of participants. Again, Volume 2 offers some relevant group exercises that can be used by facilitators.

Major emphasis should be placed upon *building a sense of group solidarity and mutual interest and caring amongst the participants*. Emphasis should also be placed upon the *fun* that the program can offer. Depending on the group, it may be useful to stage the trust-building exercises intermittently throughout the program.

Stage 2 should not extend more than one full week and at least three-quarters of the time should be used for recreational purposes.

Stage 3: Skill Development for Group Problem-solving

Stage 3 should involve formally orienting the participants to their more intense involvement in the group work aspect of Vision Seekers. Essentially, this stage is concerned with training the youth in effective and constructive ways to participate in the program as a whole and, more specifically, in the group itself. The techniques for structuring effective group sessions should be taught, as should a basic approach for organizing the daily group work session as a problem-solving process.

Participants will learn in detail an approach to operating a problem-solving group centred on the "brainstorm" and the roles of facilitator, recorder and full participant in this process. It is important to do this before the format and idea behind the social group work *limit and lead* strategy is presented and before the participant rules generated by the participants themselves are determined. The process will give participants an active sense of involvement and ownership of the problem-solving process prior to the introduction of the assertive but fair role played by the facilitator and/or group worker. It is also important that the limit and lead strategy is presented *before* the participants work on the development of participation rules, thus allowing the strategy to be a constant, around which the balance of rules can be organized.

Staff expectations of participants should be shared by staff at this stage, as part of a detailed program orientation session. As indicated, it is also critical that the basic principles of the group work approach described in detail in this chapter should be presented and explained to the participants. Essentially, the idea should be communicated that the group worker's basic job is to *set limits* and *provide consequences* for inappropriate behaviours and to *lead*

the group and each Vision Seeker towards healthy, constructive behaviour that will pay off in terms of personal development.

The *huddle-up* as an intervention procedure should also be presented.

Major emphasis should be placed on the rationale for the program so that nobody feels manipulated but, instead, see themselves as active participants in a personal and group development process. This will have been communicated at the outset, during recruitment, of course, but it should be repeated and more depth should be given to the explanation. The program does not really come alive until the group is in place.

The participants' work up of a set of rules and procedures for participation is also facilitated in order to give them a sense of ownership over the program, as well as a sense of status as partially self-governing members. Some guidance in this regard is provided in the accompanying Exercise Manual (Volume 2).

An average of one-quarter to one-half of each of each session should involve games suggested by the Recreation Coordinator or at the request of the participants.

At this stage, considerable emphasis should be placed on making sure that the recreational activities are fun and that there is a lot of humour rather than an atmosphere that is "too heavy." An overnight camp or an interesting outing or two might be considered.

Stage 4: Goal-Setting

While the participant, the parent or guardian and the program counsellor have already begun talking about some personal development goals, these goals must be clearly established and other program goals selected. Recommended areas in which goals should be set include the following:

1. learning effective cognitive and social problem-solving skills;
2. academic performance;
3. developing a recreational skill uniting the child's personal interests and aptitudes;
4. developing an altruistic attitude through voluntary community work.

The participants' pursuit of these goals should be supported by staff efforts to:

- ✓ encourage the adolescent's acquisition of a solid value framework that clearly distinguishes between right and wrong;
- ✓ set behavioural limits; and
- ✓ to lead and reinforce healthy thinking patterns and pro-social behaviour patterns.

Specific tasks and group and group/individual exercises relevant to realistic goal-setting are provided in Volume 2, Stage 4. Their purpose is to assist staff in helping each participant to establish his/her own goals and to achieve those goals through group support and reinforcement during the after-school sessions. Some of the activities will probably be pursued privately by the participant or a small group of participants under the guidance of a counsellor or program staff person.

The goal-setting process in each of these areas should involve the following:

- a. the assistance of the group exercise in self-exploration for goal-setting (Stage 4, Volume 2);
- b. a session between each Vision Seeker and the Program Director, the Counsellor and his/her family to revisit earlier, preliminary goals and to set formal goals for all parties in anticipation of the signing of the Vision Seeker Treaties.
- c. a *Vision-Seekers Treaty Signing* ceremony involving the participant, the parents or guardians, counsellor, the Chief (or, in an urban setting, an appropriate community leader), and the Program Director. The Treaty signing should be held as a group event undertaken as part of Stage 4. An Elder should hold a pipe ceremony in connection with the Treaty signing and should bless each Treaty (*Note: If the participant and/or his/her parents so choose, a minister or clergy person of another faith might also give the blessing*). The involvement in this event of the Chief or a well-known community leader is extremely important.

Stage 4 should not extend for more than three or four sessions—and, because the topics are very much like work and can be emotionally troublesome for participants, *recreation time during this stage should also be very spirited, emphasizing humour and fun*. If this is not done, you may well lose many of your participants at this stage.

Stage 5: Identity Building and Value Clarification

The programming in Stage 5 is intended to assist participants with clarification of their own values, developing a sense of cultural pride, and working through any sense of cultural confusion they may have as a result of their combined first peoples' heritage and participation in the culture and institutions of the larger society, dominated by people of European ancestry.

Learning group exercises used during this stage should focus on the engendering of cultural pride. Guest speakers might include Native/Indian Studies instructors.

An attempt should be made to demonstrate the personal empowerment that can come from conceptions of traditional spirituality, such as the understandings described in the work of the *Four Worlds Development Project*.

Finally, efforts should be made to encourage participants to see culture as a set of choices that they themselves must make and that, inevitably, some personal selection between the

traditional and the contemporary must be made. The most important point is that they themselves must carefully think through what they want from the old and from the new so that they can be proud of their choices—rather than being confused and defensive when criticized or kidded for being "too traditional" for spending a lot of time practising traditional ways or "too 'White'" (or, an "Apple," red on the outside and white on the inside) when participating actively in nontraditional pursuits.

Stage 6: Thinking Styles and Social Actions that Empower

Children and young adolescents with good problem-solving skills readily make new friends and they are comfortable in new situations. They are also open and welcoming to new people they meet and cooperative with other children and adults, knowing how to acquire and maintain friendships. Such children compromise in coming to terms with the interests and expectations of others rather than being rigid or stubbornly insistent on getting their own way. Further, they trust others and they inspire trust in others. Youth with good problem-solving skills know how to confront conflicts with confidence. They maintain an attitude of assertiveness with others, as opposed to one of aggression or passivity and compliance. Youth with strong problem-solving skills are clear about their own wishes and they stick to their guns when they strongly believe they are right. They also respect differences, whether between the talents, size, personality, interests or cultures of people they meet.

Many, perhaps most, children do not fit this sunny profile, of course, and, by definition, the troubled adolescents participating in a Vision Seekers' program will exhibit the opposite of many of these traits. Many are depressed and many are aggressive and "hyper," with energy to burn; unfortunately, they have only coercive strategies for getting their way. Still others will be simply too rigid in their attitudes and behaviours to easily fit in to any social situation save a retaliatory, marginal group. In Stage 6, the challenge is to work with all of these adolescents and help them, through structured learning exercises and active recreation, to learn the types of important social skills that will give them the opportunities to make the transition into a fruitful and happy adulthood.

The focus of the after-school, group work program at this stage is to teach critical problem-solving and social skills. The premise of this stage of the program is that children with a firm sense of their own competence and a strong, fundamental set of problem-solving skills will be less likely to get "stuck" permanently in behavioural patterns which, in the long-term, are likely to sabotage their opportunities to live a satisfying adult life.

The problem-solving method presented through this stage of exercises is presented in detail in Volume 2, the Exercise Manual, so it will only be summarized here.

Averse situations or disruptive events often call out learned, self- or other-destructive negative interpretations and accompanying, painful emotional consequences, such as anxiety, sadness, or anger. These emotions in turn can result in reactions that tend to inflict pain on others and/or further pain on the self.

People have a tendency to think that the events that disappoint us *cause* our disappointed thoughts and their accompanying anger, anxiety or sadness, and that our emotions demand that we act in certain ways. In fact, we have learned to interpret adverse events and act upon those events in specific ways—and if we have learned something, we can unlearn it! In other words, we can extinguish outstanding thought and behaviour patterns. We make choices in these matters, or at least we *can* make choices, rather than accepting what seem like automatic, scripted thoughts. In truth, it is really the extent to which we choose to accept or reject ideas and reactions to events that determines how much we are in control—not only in the face of disruptive events but in the face of adverse circumstances generally and, indeed, in the face of our personal lives generally.

Personal empowerment revolves around the crafting of our own goals, lifestyles and behaviours, *not* acting out conditioned responses to events that provoke us. People who do not make such choices are people whose lives are ruled by disappointments and destructive responses to those disappointments.

Exercises are included built around the DETSCAT model (explained in the exercises) that suggest that, while we all (human beings) tend to blame events for our disappointments, in truth, the event itself is *not* disappointing; it is only disappointing to us *after* we have interpreted it (or reinterpreted it after other people have communicated to us their expectation that we be disappointed—and often that we be disappointed in a particular way [e.g. It isn't typically appropriate to laugh raucously at funerals]).

Many of our negative reactions to circumstances do seem almost automatic, leaving virtually no time for interpretation. Actually, most of our reactions to circumstances that we consider adverse are almost automatic: We immediately respond to many unplanned and unwanted events or situations in predictable ways. We become anxious, sad, frightened or angry. But it is also true that virtually all of these we have learned, with the limited but notable exceptions of certain basic reflexes that come with the genetics of infancy. And many events that we think *should* make us sad or angry don't because, over time, just like any other kind of training, their full impact diminishes as we get further and further removed from the origins of the learning process through which we were taught that specific events *should* inspire sadness or anger.

As we get older or if our parents haven't spent a lot of time training us in how we *should* feel about various things, we often find that we don't react the way we once thought we should to events that are very painful to other people. What this really means is that we don't react the way that others expect us to react. In short, our interpretations of how to act are taught to us socially (by other people) and we are reminded and encouraged in our responses by the expectations of others. So, in other words, DE (a potentially adverse event) only results in negative T (a negative interpretation of a disruptive event) if our socialization (S) has trained us to interpret a category of events to be associated with a negative thought, such as sadness or anger—or if we are surrounded by people who influence our interpretation in the present.

Our context for interpreting most events is one in which learning generally takes place socially: We learn (and often relearn) our expected reactions from others. Indeed, even when

there are no people immediately present to indicate their expectations to us, we have internalized a model of how we think we should think and feel and how people in our immediate social network will react.

The good news is that if we are aware of how situations that tend to provoke extreme negative emotions in us lead to particular reactions, then we can intervene to avoid anger-associated situations, as well as to neutralize our feelings and to avoid self-destructive or other-destructive behavioural reactions. Stated simply, we can learn to be the author of our own reactions to circumstances, thus enabling us to maximize the positive aspects of our lives.

The DETSCAT model can break the seemingly automatic link between negative events and our emotional, physical and social reactions? Surely most of us would like to avoid as much pain in life as we can and achieve as much pleasure as is possible, so the idea is tempting.

The exercises provided in Stage 6 were prepared to assist the group worker(s) to describe, explain and impart the use of DETSCAT to the Vision Seekers.

Stage 7: Understanding Family Dynamics

Troubled children often come from families characterized by internal social dynamics that reinforce their troubled thoughts and behaviours; in fact, their families are frequently the primary source of their troubles. While Vision Seekers is intended to work with both the youth and his/her family, the fact is that the families (i.e., parents) of troubled youth will often be uncooperative or simply unable to provide appropriate input into the process. Typically, the youths will retain some fundamental loyalty to their families or at least to some of its members, no matter how strained his/her relations with the family nor how negligent or abusive might be the parents. At some level, the adolescents must also retain some degree of trust in their family members, even if very little trust is earned by the parents and siblings. They are therefore always somewhat vulnerable to being placed in high risk situations by family members.

These young people are also vulnerable to inappropriately accepting blame for the difficulties their families are experiencing and for assuming responsibilities that would better rest with the parents. Helping such adolescents gain insights into their own family dynamics is thus extremely important, although it is also a very complex and delicate task for the person responsible for the educational process—and *if* it moves into dealing with actual situations, the Counsellor or a highly trained group worker should be responsible for facilitating the process. Why? Because the process is relatively intense and can trigger various emotional reactions from the participants. Further, parents may be offended by various, uncontrollable outcomes of the group work process.

In short, in order to manage the learning process with an eye on safety and to handle any reactions from parents or community leaders acting on their behalf, these exercises should be *professionally managed*. If they cannot be, they should be avoided altogether, especially any

exercises in which the child's own family are the sources of detailed analytical discussion. In such circumstances, a more educational approach organized around lectures might be taken, without focussing on any specific family.

The value of this stage of the learning process supersedes the anticipated community reactions to it. It must be recognized that family systems are typically the source of many of the psycho-social problems experienced by adolescents. It therefore follows that the adolescents attempting to overcome significant problems of personal development need to gain insight into their own families as dynamic systems of interaction, and their roles within it. Through family systems analysis, the child will see that s/he is not personally to blame for family difficulties. S/he can also learn some skills for coping with such difficulties and exerting a positive influence on the shape of family patterns that have a negative impact on him or her.

Finally, it is important that the adolescent from a troubled family learn to identify the warning signs indicating when it is appropriate to seek respite from home situations that might be posing critical health and safety risks—and what steps to take to make a safe escape rather than running away to the streets of urban centres, where risk levels are also extremely high!

The following is a useful audio-visual resource to accompany the group work during this stage:

- *Families in Trouble: Learning to Cope* (a 35-min. video helping participants to survive the stress of a family in trouble and to understand that they are not at fault for someone else's problem. Shows them that taking charge of their lives also means accepting the fact that not everything that affects them is within their control. Urges them to insulate themselves from the problem as best they can, gives them guidelines for coping). Recommended by: School Library Journal, QUEST International. Skills for Adolescence.

Note: Stage 7 should be the last stage of Year 1.

Stage 8: Managing Anger in a Healthy Way (Beginning in Year 2)

Note: Stage 8 should begin in Year 2.

Troubled youth generally experience a lot of anger and they tend to deal with it in ways that hurt themselves or other people—often people who are completely innocent of being a cause of their frustration. In Stage 8, the social group work curriculum extends the sociocognitive model of personal skills development to the management of anger.

The group learning exercise in this stage should assist Vision Seekers in understanding anger and its functions and when anger is justified and when it is unjustified. It should also help them to explore their own anger in a systematic way and teach them to identify its "cues" in their physiologies (i.e., physical feelings), psyches and social surroundings. The exercises should also teach them and encourage them to use some techniques for neutralizing provocations and avoiding habits which themselves tend to provoke anger in other people,

thus triggering negative interpersonal relations or actual confrontations.

Stage 9: Building Healthy Relationships

The emphasis in Stage 9 is on the development of social relations based on mutual respect, dignity and thinking about the future consequences of current actions. How to make and sustain friendships is examined. Power in relationships should be examined, as should what constitutes interpersonal abuse. Non-destructive methods of managing anger and conflict resolution should be explored and, when possible, modelled by staff. Peer friendships, gender relations should be taken as the primary focus of the group work discussions but relations between Elders, other age groups and between persons with significant differences generally. Fair and effective listening and communication skills should also be emphasized.

A special emphasis is given at this stage to the consequences of unsafe sex and to the responsible choices that can be made regarding family-formation and childbirth.

Volume 2 offers various exercises in support of the themes of this stage.

This stage could extend for as long as eight weeks.

Stage 10: Developing Self by Helping Others: The Community Service Project

The final stage of the Vision Seekers program involves the engagement of the participants in a community services project. Through these means, the lessons of problem-solving, caring for others, and personal responsibility should be applied in ways that benefit either disadvantaged members of the community or the community as a whole.

The cultures of first peoples share with Western society the fundamental tenet that all members of a community share responsibility for all members of the community. Brendtro and Ness (1983) have conducted research which suggests that troubled young people increase their sense of self-worth as they become committed to the positive value of caring for others. Elkind (1984) argues that helping others improves self-esteem and increased self-esteem allows young people to overcome their self-centred preoccupations and contribute to others.

The purpose of this stage of the program is to finalize the strong reinforcement of the goal-directed behaviour of participants. The stage extends the learned personal and social skills into the community action arena.

10.3 PLANNING THE RECREATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In addition to the therapeutic dimensions of the program, the participants should be having fun and learning skills that not only can they enjoy in the learning process itself but that can be permanently incorporated into their lifestyles. In Chapter 12, the recreational aspects of

the program are discussed, both as an integrated part of the after-school program and as an added dimension involving excursions and external events.

10.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the core of the Vision Seekers program, which is keyed to the exercises and activities in Volume 2, has been described in detail. The program rolls out gradually and organically as it facilitates the bonding of the youth to each other, to the staff, to the group as a whole, and to the program concept and activities, and then moves through a structured sequence of exercises and activities. As outlined, the program is built around a social group work methodology and peer support and group and team planning experiences are designed to assist participants in the pursuit of their personal, social, recreational and academic goals.

11.0 WORKING WITH PARENTS

The parents of troubled youth tend to live with a set of difficult, unresolved personal issues. They are typically overwhelmed by practical problems that make them vulnerable and impoverished financially and they are dependent upon the often contradictory guidance and direction given by various health, social service and policing agencies. These parents are responsible for families which live through a series of ongoing crises. The parents cannot take charge in these crisis situations because, typically, they have personally been unable to overcome fundamental problems, including the neurotic, hostile and depressive after-effects of the trauma of childhood abuse that they have themselves experienced; basic literacy problems; and a lack of employable skills.

The inability to overcome these fundamental problems block the parents of troubled teens from meeting some of their own most basic needs and, consequently, their children are either overlooked or mistreated. Often, these parents escape from their crises by "medicating" themselves with alcohol or other drugs, gambling or engaging in impulsive, ill-fated sexual relations outside of their marriages or common-law unions. They become what appears, behaviourally, "addicted to their crises." In an almost constant desperation, such parents expend almost all of their social and psychic energies either escaping from their problems or fighting or trying to come to grips with the directives or advice of legal authorities, social workers, school principals or Band officials. Typically they see themselves fighting for what they regard as their rights or their family's rights to additional financial help, a different interpretation of a child welfare assessment, or the meaning of a probation order.

This crisis-oriented family is not unique to aboriginal communities; it is a typical outcome of a society in which significant pools of impoverished people have been rendered unemployable and dependent upon and dictated to by state authorities. The helping agencies operated by these authorities are generally ill-equipped to transform the desperate circumstances of the people they regard as their clients. Agency personnel are mandated to intervene and to offer some assistance and they are required to regulate behaviours that are regarded as legally deviant. Though the agencies and human services personnel may typically be ill-equipped and despite the difficulties they face, both *experience and research has taught us that organized social interventions such as Vision Seekers can work and work very effectively* in overcoming the cyclical process of disadvantage that moves from one generation to the next.

First peoples are now in the unique circumstance of having acquired from the Canadian state system much of the authority and responsibility for the provision of services to their own impoverished and troubled families. Willingly or not, First Nations have thus taken on the same obstacles and mandates as the problems the mainstream social agencies and policing services have faced. The challenge is to make a difference, to reflect more sensitivity, creativity and effectiveness through such interventions—*not* to simply repeat the efforts of the past, thus perpetuating the same problems.

It is also true that there are limited resources available within a Vision Seekers program and, hence, priority should be given to the youth to whom the program is dedicated: When parents are simply too unwilling to respond in support of the Vision Seeker or their problems are so

complicated that they simply can't focus systematically on the child's issues, the emphasis must shift to helping the child cope or withdraw from the home situation. At that point it must be assumed that the child welfare agency mandated to ensure that a child has adequate care and supervision must assume full responsibility for any continuing work with the family. If continued participation in the Vision Seekers program is part of the child welfare plan, then the youth should obviously remain active.

11.1 SUPPORTING TROUBLED FAMILIES

The Vision Seekers program staff and adjunct Counsellor should establish an integrated, case management approach to working with the families of participants. The school guidance counsellor, a child welfare worker, the Community Health Nurse (CHN), a local physician, the NNADAP — or other Alcohol and Drug Abuse Worker — should be considered as part of the case management team. While time availability and skill factors should determine *who* serves as the primary case worker, the Vision Seekers program staff might encourage the approaches described below as part of the intervention process.

- During the early engagement stage, staff should simply attempt to establish rapport with the parents and, gradually, to develop a basic foundation of trust. To even get beyond the initial few discussions, it is essential that the emphasis is placed on *listening* to the views and expression of personal difficulties of parents and siblings. Stated another way, the emphasis should be placed on *empathizing* and on being *nonjudgemental*.
- The worker should assess the verbal accessibility of the parents. If verbal accessibility is very limited and the parent is unresponsive despite explicit encouragement, the following six-step guideline is recommended:
 1. At the outset, encourage conversation of any kind, on any topic, at any pace. Find any opportunity to have a conversation (e.g., while in a car)
 2. Make the initial topics of conversation concrete, superficial and not related to the Vision Seeker or to any problems.
 3. Attempt to provide support for the parent's ego by saying things that reflect positively on his or her self-image.
 4. Help the parent to name his/her feelings.
 6. Help the parent to deal with any possible guilt associated with having a child identified as having special problems.
 7. Encourage a relationship based on open communication.
 8. Be verbally accessible through active listening and modelling behaviour.

It should be recognized that the verbally inaccessible family may take several months to engage in a productive manner.

- Building a strong alliance with parents is important because, in general, no matter how antithetical surface appearances may indicate, parents do try to do their best to help their children, but they carry varying loads of baggage in making their efforts. It is also important because children view their parents as more important than the Vision Seekers staff or other helping professionals and, therefore, parents are potentially the best therapists for their children—and best goal-reinforcers and best disciplinarians. Parents are also more likely to implement suggestions from someone who is genuinely sensitive to them and is trying to help them rather than replace them.
- Several techniques from adult education should assist in strengthening the case worker/parent relationship; they include reinforcing the following:
 - ▶ *Self-identity.* Parents should be approached as independent rather than dependent adults, even if they seem to be very dependent. As individuals grow they develop needs to be perceived by others as self-directed and if they are treated thus, their self-esteem is enhanced. An independent relationship between parent and case worker should foster the alliance necessary for supporting the youth in the Vision Seekers program.
 - ▶ *The experience of the parents.* Accepting the experience of parents as a good source of insight and analogies is important. Accepting their experience is accepting them as important.
 - ▶ *Parents' needs.* Any successful intervention plan must address the needs of the parents and the youth.
- The Vision Seekers program might make a major contribution by establishing a parent education group. Some guidelines for designing such a group include the following:
 - ▶ Include the developmental expectations that parents should appropriately have of early adolescents, as well as the challenges facing *both* the child in dealing with puberty and the transition into the teenage years and the parent(s) in dealing with changes in the child.
 - ▶ Have the meetings on a regular basis and create something special about each of them (e.g., enjoyable social or recreational dimensions should be added).
 - ▶ For those who don't have transportation, agree to arrange to pick them up for each session at a particular time
 - ▶ Ensure that there are a lot of supportive comments made about the attempts of the parents to meet the needs of their youth.

11.1.1 - ASSISTING PARENTS WITH THEIR DISCIPLINARY STRATEGIES

Some parents of troubled children do try or try intermittently to structure the discipline they apply to their child's inappropriate behaviour but they simply don't know how. Typically, they have either quit altogether in frustration or they quit and start again in a cyclical start-stop

pattern that is useful to neither the parent nor the youth. It is beyond the scope of this book to go into detail on how to assist parents with their disciplinary practices; however, some advice is warranted. Single sessions or group sessions (i.e., several parents) with parents might be built around the avoidance of the ineffective parental responses to misbehaviour identified in "a " below and the effective or "assertive" responses outlined in "b."

a. Ineffective Parental Responses to Misbehaviour

Questions: Why won't you ever do what I say? How many times do I have to tell you not to do that? What will I ever do with you? When will you ever learn?

Begging: Please try to do what we've been telling you to do. For God's sake, please behave.

Threatening: If you do that again, you're in big trouble (yet failing to follow through when the child does misbehave).

Ineffective *Hostile* Responses to Misbehaviour

Verbal put-downs such as "You are a horrible kid!"

Unrealistic threats: If you do that again you will wish you didn't live here!

Overly severe punishment: You can't ever have a friend over again.

Physical responses that release your anger such as screaming violently, striking with the hand, fist, foot or an object.

b. Effective, Assertive Responses that Work: A Step-by-Step Approach

The following steps, as conceived by parent educator and assertiveness trainer, Lee Kanter (1985), should be followed:

Step 1: Communicate Assertively

- ▶ Be specific, avoiding vague statements such as "be good" or "act nice," instead providing a specific message such as, *Bill, I want you to turn off the T.V. and do your homework!*"—and looking Bill in the eye when saying it.
- ▶ Consciously use nonverbal techniques. Stay calm, speaking in a firm, calm tone of voice and creating eye contact when you speak.
- ▶ Use hand and gestures that conform to your message.
- ▶ Be very specific about what you want from your youth and, when s/he argues with you, be firm and repetitive until the action is taken—unless the argument is compelling (Don't be spiteful or unreasonable).

Step 2: Backing Up Words With Actions

It is essential to apply consequences to inappropriate behaviours—and to use disciplinary consequences appropriately. Parents should be advised to have consequences prepared in advance so you don't flounder when a situation arises in which you might have to discipline your youth. There are some other principals to consider as well including:

- ▶ Consequences must be something that children don't like but that are not psychologically or physically harmful. In short, they shouldn't degrade them emotionally or hurt them physically, but they should eliminate a pleasurable expectation of the youth or involve him or her in something that s/he really does not want to do or be involved in. Some common disciplinary consequences are as follows:
- Separate the youth from friends or siblings for a certain period (depending on the severity of the undesirable behaviour)
- Take away privileges, such as use of the telephone, Sega game, or TV set, or play outside (grounding), getting an allowance, etc.
- Desirable activity options should be limited until the youth completes a task that you wanted him to and s/he agreed to in the first place
 - ▶ Parents should provide consequences as a choice: In short, the parent have some alternatives (all unattractive to the youth) but give the youth the choice of which one to apply.
 - ▶ The consequence (s) should be applied as soon as possible after the misbehaviour.
 - ▶ The parent(s) should be consistent: Provide the consequence every time the child chooses to misbehave.
 - ▶ The consequence should be provided in a non-hostile, matter of fact manner.
 - ▶ Parents should be advised never to take a consequence away. If you back down, you won't be taken seriously and you'll have endless arguments to deal with.
 - ▶ If disciplinary consequences are having little effect, the parent(s) should try new ones until they get ones that are effective.

Step 3: Laying Down the Law

In situations where the conflict between parents and youth are firmly rooted, parents will have to move to an even more assertive position, which Canter calls "laying down the law." In this situation, parents are advised to set up a systematic assertiveness plan, probably with the help of the Counsellor. This involves deciding on a specific range of behaviours that need changing (i.e., the behavioural limits) and a set of consequences, determined in advance. Both partners or parents and grandparents must cooperate to carry out the discipline. Other

considerations include:

- ▶ Monitoring the youth's behaviour, if necessary, and including the Vision Seekers' staff and school staff and neighbours in the monitoring process.
- ▶ Setting up a gradation of consequences so that, should the misbehaviour continue, the consequences get worse each time.
- ▶ Establish a contract with the youth that identifies a set of rewards for *positive* behavioural change and have it signed by both the youth and the parent(s).

These basic "parenting tips" might be offered through a formal training process or as part of counselling sessions.

11.1.2 - PARENTAL BEHAVIOURS THAT INTERFERE WITH THE YOUTH'S PROGRESS

There are typically three kinds of problems with parental involvement with the Vision Seekers program: (1) a lack of participation and support for the child in the program (2) the active sabotaging of the child's commitment to and involvement in the program and (3) a tendency to act as an advocate of the child, no matter what his or her behaviours, rather than coordinating his/her parenting approach and support for the child with the program itself and the efforts of the staff.

Apathy

You can predict with some confidence that you will have several parents who simply aren't willing to show the kind of effort that ideally would serve the child's personal growth within the program. If the parent has an addiction or mental health problem or a problem of family violence, it is important to encourage the parent to address these problems—and, if human resources allow, to provide special support for the parent on his or her healing journey. The Counsellor working with the program may be able to actively engage the parent and work directly with his or her problem. However, it may require a special referral. Whatever the situation, it is extremely important to encourage parents to address their own problems. If they are too dependent on the advice of "experts," it is unlikely they will be able to have much to offer a troubled adolescent. Of course, those who are confronting circumstances that limit their ability to control their own lives need assistance in doing it and, to whatever extent possible, parents with these severe problems should be encouraged and supported in their attempts.

The Saboteur

Some parents actively work against the attempts of the child to participate positively in the program. These individuals are typically very unfulfilled themselves. Often, they are either somewhat jealous of the child's endeavours or they are so overwhelmed by self-contempt that their negative self-concept spreads beyond them to their own dependents. Evidence of this sabotage will frequently present itself directly or indirectly through the child's discussions in the problem-solving groups and general rap sessions. Ongoing consultations with the Program Director will pick this type of evidence up. Sometimes it appears in the placement of impractical demands on the child, such as frequent and seemingly unfair demands that he or she miss days or come home early from the session. Other indicators are the "bad-mouthing" that is often overheard around Band offices, which is openly shared with program staff or the committee or board overseeing the program.

For the sake of the child and the continued support of the program in the community and by the Chief and Council, it is important to seek out the parent or guardian who is undermining the program or the child's participation in it. The parent should be gently confronted with the situation with such phrases as, "I'm wondering if you don't want Johnny to be in the program or at least you're not really clear about what it's all about." Then listen to the reply and share your evidence of *why* you think s/he does not seem to be supportive.

After listening to the parent, ask him to visit the program the following day (or another convenient day) and bring any complaints or reservations they might have about the program.

If you can get the parent to a meeting, here are some of the topics you might want to cover:

- Your appreciation of their concern and their willingness to stand up for the rights of their child.
- A review the goals of the program.
- A review the specific goals of the child.
- A description of the specific approach to dealing with the child's rule violation or disruptiveness. You should describe the positive approach and why you favour it—a lesson which the parent(s) might learn from.
- How they, as parents, can assist in attainment of the program's goals.
- Your willingness to discuss with them any problems that might crop up along the way as you work together in dealing with the behavioural difficulties at hand.

Inappropriate Advocacy

Many parents unwitting fall into the trap of investing their own egos in their children's interactions with the external world. They fail to draw clear boundaries around their own pursuits and the affairs of their children. Such parents may or may not themselves treat their child very well but they take personally any disciplinary efforts by other adults. The discipline

of other adults, even teachers, coaches and recreational or social program directors is immediately suspected of being a slight or an act of disrespect aimed as much at the parent as the child. Parents like this seem to have a greater stake in what's going on than the kids do. Such "triangles of tension" consisting of parent, child and program authorities (or teachers or even coaches) are inevitable. While Vision Seekers staff may sometimes wish the parents would just give them the benefit of the doubt as a basic assumption, parents begin with very different expectations of programs such as Vision Seekers. Remember, there is already a sensitivity and defensiveness to be expected, simply based on the fact that their child has been singled out for special needs programming.

Dealing with such parents must begin with deflection away from the conflict. Often such parents begin with a very hostile attitude. If you can, ask them to directly participate. Carefully explain the rules that the child in question may have violated, and respectfully ask for the parent's opinion about what should be done. If the child denies breaking the rules, which is not uncommon, provide the evidence you have and ask the parent the same question, with the qualification that you would really like him to take the evidence at hand into account. This basic exercise will dampen the hostility of all but the most angry parent. If the child is persistently in violation of the rules or is exceptionally disruptive, if the parent will not participate in disciplining the child, then the child's participation must be suspended until both the child and the parent are willing to cooperate.

Hopefully, you won't have extremely unreasonable parents that will force you to act in this way. After all, the program is intended to help troubled children with parents who exhibit various behaviours that inhibit the healthy personal development of the child. Expelling a child from a program is precisely what you want to avoid. Yet for the good of the other children and the overall program itself, sometimes such drastic action is in order. When you have a meeting with a parent, you might cover some of the same topics outlined above for dealing with the *Saboteur*.

11.2 SUMMARY

The parents of troubled teens typically require support themselves and this fact should be taken into account; in fact, if it isn't, many parents will simply refuse to let their child participate in Vision Seekers or they will undermine the positive nature of his or her participation.

It is useful to view the lives of the families of the participants as "crisis-oriented" and to assume that parents can benefit from some basic parent effectiveness advice, which can be provided as part of the program—either as part of a formal training program or as part of the counselling process.

When there is evidence of child abuse, it is essential that responsible action be taken in the form of reporting that evidence to authorities., although, if possible, the child welfare agency should be asked to keep the source of the referral in confidence. The "after-shock" of such referrals and child apprehensions is considerable in a reserve community and its repercussions

can jeopardize the continuance of the Vision Seekers project in the community. Even parents who are not especially abusive with their youthful dependents can have a significantly negative impact on the success of Vision Seekers. In addition to having a negative impact on their own child's participation, some parental role behaviours, which have been identified, can have a significant, negative impact on the operations of the Vision Seekers program. It is important that staff respond to these behaviours in an assertive but diplomatic and thoughtful fashion.



12.0 THE RECREATION COMPONENT OF THE PROGRAM

Healthy lifestyles include a capacity for enjoying oneself in solitude as well as a capacity for participating in an enjoyable way with other people. Conceptually, the "ingredients" of the "recipe" for the recreation program should therefore include "one part fun," "one part recreational skill development," "one part 'learning to work enjoyably alone'," and "one part learning to work with other people on a project or on a team." In this chapter, we describe how these various parts can be mixed to create an appropriate recreation program supportive of the individual goal-setting pursued by the Vision Seekers.

12.1 ROLE OF THE RECREATION COORDINATOR

The role of the Recreation Coordinator in Vision Seekers should be that of *planner*, *coordinator*, *counsellor*, *instructor* and *coach*. Each role is critical to not only the recreational element of the program but to the program as a whole.

Planner

As planner, the Recreation Coordinator should be responsible for developing an annual program plan. S/he should also prepare a plan for the summer camp experience, and for assisting the Program Director in preparing the overall annual plan. Of utmost importance is the need to integrate the recreation agenda and the summer camp program into the overall program plan in a way that supports the fundamental goals of Vision Seekers.

The Recreation Coordinator should also be responsible for preparing a weekly plan (It is recommended that the preceding Thursday be the deadline for the completion of the Monday to Friday plan for the after-school program. Fridays tend to be days when staff have the weekend in mind more than the program).

Coordinator

The role of coordinating the recreation program should be sufficiently comprehensive that the Program Director is relieved of virtually all responsibilities for recreational activities—with two noteworthy exceptions. The Director should give final program approval for the following week's recreational plan because it should be tied carefully to the sequence of learning exercises that make up the rest of the schedule (for which the Director has responsibility).

The Program Director should also be expected to provide cover-off during the occasional absences of the Recreation Coordinator, unless other arrangements can be made (*Note:* It is always useful to have a volunteer "in the wings" as back-up, so that the Program Director can concentrate on the group work exercises and other project activities that s/he has primary responsibility for). Some absences are to be expected, of course, including temporary

illnesses, relevant training or conferences, and urgent personal matters, such as dealing with medical or family problems, so "back-fill" arrangements for *both* the Recreational Coordinator and Program Director are essential.

The Recreation Coordinator should act as the on-site manager of the recreation program, serving as referee for team games, policing the rules of group solo sports, and supervising instructional and work sessions in music, dance, hobbies and arts and crafts that may be part of the overall recreation program.

One of the key functions of on-site coordination is to maintain order and discipline. This can be a major problem, especially with the troubled youngsters in Vision Seekers. There are several factors to understand about participants' behaviours in relation to this problem.

First, the kids are *not* miniature adults. Few children, including young adolescents, want to sit still while others are involved in vigorous play activity. So use exercises that can involve *all* of the participants most of the time.

Second, pre-adolescents and youth in their early teenage years are going through a developmental process that leads to the establishment of their own independence and personal identity, and this causes them to test the limits imposed by authority figures. While this "limits-testing" is very frustrating and seems to present itself as a constant threat of a "hostile takeover" by one or more of the youths, the Coordinator really has a special, hidden leverage. In general, most pre-adolescents and early adolescents are limit-testing because they want clearly defined limits and structure and they want fairness in maintaining them. So their testing can often be read as an invitation for clear, firm and fair rules.

Youth, even troubled ones, are seeking predictability and consistency—and they insist on fairness when it comes to them personally. It would be fair to say that children in that age group are actually *hypersensitive* to unfairly maintained rules. If one youth is favoured in the rule-application process, the rest will feel slighted and are likely to be resentful of apparent favouritism.

Coordinator's can utilize their general desire for rules and order as an opportunity for teaching by carefully observing and maintaining the rules and by role-modelling fairness.

Recreation Coordinator Role as Counsellor

In the Vision Seekers program, the role of the Recreation Coordinator as a counsellor is not one that usurps the key role of the professional counsellor who acts in a support capacity with the program. The role is really that of what some physical activity and recreational administrators refer to as a "leisure counsellor."

A reasonable view of the concept "leisure" depicts a state of being in which the individual believes s/he has, and acts out, the right to optimum freedom of self-expression.

And what, in essence is "counselling?"

In this writer's view, counselling is a process involving verbal, facilitative techniques, through which one individual assists another (or others) to gain self-insight and to learn to make positive choices about his or her self, others and environmental influences. According to Compton and Goldstein (1977), a useful definition of leisure counselling can be stated as follows:

(It is) . . . a helping process utilizing verbal facilitation techniques to promote and increase self-awareness; awareness of leisure attitudes, values and feelings; and development of decision-making and problem-solving skills related to leisure participation with self, others, and environmental factors (1977: 22).

As a leisure counsellor, the Recreation Coordinator should assist each participant in identifying their aptitudes and interests in leisure-time pursuits, and analysing their beliefs, fears, and pains about leisure participation (or lack thereof).

The Coordinator should attempt to have at least one independent session at the outset to address personal recreational goals with each participant and meet privately with individual participants on occasion throughout their program. The child's hobby or sport skill development activity goal (or set of goals) should grow out of the early participation of the Recreation Coordinator with the child's establishment of individual program goals. This requires consultations with the child and the counsellor and, if appropriate, with parents or substitute caregivers.

While some individual work between the Coordinator and participants is necessary, the Recreation Coordinator should centre her problem-solving agenda on the group as a whole, taking advantage of the fact that the other participants, as a group, can participate in assisting with problem-solving in general, even with the initial goal-setting process of each participant.

The group can be far more encouraging and persuasive than an individual counsellor. Group members are also very helpful in suggesting appropriate "homework assignments" geared to challenging irrational thoughts and eliminate risk behaviours, such as "hanging out" with peers who encourage self-destructive or anti-social behaviour.

The recreation goals of each participant should meet the following criteria:

- ▶ The goals should reflect *both* the child's aptitude and interest, *if* it is possible to determine both.
- ▶ To ensure that the goals are enhancing of the child's personal development, the goal(s) should be realistic; in other words, they should be achievable rather than being likely to lead to frustration and a loss of self-esteem.
- ▶ If possible and if the child is willing, the goal(s) should focus on a skill that can lead to a life-time leisure pursuit that promotes a healthy lifestyle.
- ▶ While the primary skill development goal can target on either a group activity (e.g., a team sport) or an individual activity (sport, craft activity or other skill), one of the goals

should include learning to participate cooperatively in team activities.

To prepare and/or upgrade counselling skills, the Recreation Coordinator should focus on the following broad areas:

- A general knowledge of normal patterns of psychological, physical and social growth during the 12-15 year old age cohort.
- A knowledge of the implications of abnormal behaviour and developmental patterns (physically, affectively, and cognitively).
- Knowledge of and skills utilizing a variety of facilitation techniques and concepts.

In the Vision Seekers program, recreation has a purpose: It is all about learning. So the Recreation Coordinator, like the Program Director, should establish his or her role as an educator (or "teacher" or "instructor") as early as possible. Whether they express it directly or not, the program participants probably want help from staff in attempting to achieve certain recreational skill development goals. So it is important for the Recreation Coordinator to structure the participation as a learning (rather than as a competitive) environment.

Some Advice to the Recreation Coordinator

Always give instruction in a positive manner, emphasizing the good things that will occur if participants progress in their learning of a skill. Give instruction in a clear, concise manner and, if possible, show them one or several ways to achieve the acquisition of fundamental or more challenging skills.

It is also important to always work to dissuade the children from making disparaging remarks or other "put downs" of their peers. The strongest rewards come from the encouragement of the other kids. And it is rewards like these that lead to the learning of the most challenging skills.

You should remember that everything you do communicates something to program participants. It is worthwhile to develop the habit of asking yourself (and, at times, the participants) what your actions have communicated, and if you are communicating effectively.

It is worth remembering that communication is a two-way street. If you keep the lines of communication open, you will probably become aware of the best times to truly "connect with" the child's interest and receptiveness to instruction. Fostering two-way communication is not the same thing as allowing program participants to be disrespectful to you. It is, rather, an open invitation for them to turn to you when they want help with something, be that a personal issue or a skill-related problem.

The Recreation Coordinator as Learning Facilitator

While not a teacher *per se*, the Recreational Coordinator will have to teach the skills and rules associated with both sport and hobby activities.

The Recreation Coordinator as Coach

Coaching can be an extremely significant, positive (or negative) influence on the lives of adolescents. In the Vision Seekers program, it is important to consider what it is that a coach can do to support each of the participants in realizing their individual goals, as well coaching the group as a whole, working together, as a team, in learning new skills. In some instances, the role of coach will be literal: The Vision Seekers group might occasionally compete in a competitive team sport against teams of young people external to the program—or they might even be enrolled in a league.

As a community health promotion strategy, winning at team sports should never be the most fundamental measure of coaching. Successful coaching should be measured in terms of how much the participants enjoy relating to you and their fellow Vision Seekers during recreation activities, the extent to which they learn to feel better about themselves as a part of and as a result of their involvement in recreational activities, how much they have improved their skills, and how much they look forward to further participation in their sport (or sports) of choice.

To assist participants to score high on these "measures," it is important that the Recreation Coordinator serves as a role model. Maintaining poise when the team is playing another team and losing badly or suffering from biased refereeing; treating children as if they deserve to have their dignity respected, even if they are not skilful or lack motivation in the sport. These qualities can be shared and, yes, children do see them and learn from them. The Coordinator can become something of a hero to the participants, sometimes without even trying. Many of the kids in the program will be desperately seeking adult role models so the Recreation Coordinator has a chance to exert an enormous, positive influence on the youth, who sometimes completely lack adult figures in their lives who they can readily trust. It is an opportunity that should be seized.

In supporting participants in their goal-achievement efforts, the Coordinator may use a *positive* approach or a *negative* approach, the former involving attempts to strengthen desirable behaviours, the latter to eliminate negative behaviours through penalties or criticism. The motivating factor in the second approach is fear, while the motivating factor in the first is reward for performance. The first approach is positive for several reasons, one being that many of the children in the program simply won't tolerate an authoritarian or negative approach: After all, they are *not* a captive audience! The positive approach also works better. It is more effective because it creates an enjoyable leisure climate.

The positive approach to coaching characteristically gives emphasis to reward and encouragement. The most effective way to build desirable behaviours is to reward positive behaviours. The Recreation Coordinator should always be on the lookout for what the

participants do well and what improvements they have made, in the full range of skills, from motor skills to social skills—and s/he should let the kids know when they have done something well! Rewards can include a friendly nod, a pat on the back, clapping, cheering and using a child's name when doing so, as well as specific words of encouragement.

Encouragement should be focussed on effort, not applied as a demand for results. And Coordinators shouldn't be *unrealistic*! It makes no sense to expect Olympic standards from thirteen year olds. Impossible expectations unwittingly encourage a sense of failure if children think you can't be satisfied with what they can realistically expect to achieve. Most children know when they have made a mistake and they are embarrassed about it.

The most useful thing for the Coordinator to do is to provide them with understanding and encouragement immediately after their mistake. Pretending it wasn't a mistake is ill-advised, however. They'll see right through this and be even further humiliated by the condescension. The Coordinator might admit to making similar mistakes himself but s/he recognizes that there are specific ways to correct the error. That moment represents a wonderful time for instruction. The child is *really* listening!

Rules can also play an important role in building team spirit amongst participants in the program. It should be emphasized that, during a game *all* members of the team are part of the game, especially those on the bench. Nobody should be made to feel they are "just a bencher." In other words, the positive approach should also be applied to actual competitive situations as well. Use reward to strengthen team participation. By strengthening desirable behaviours, misbehaviours are often automatically prevented.

In dealing with rule violations, the most important thing is to be consistent and impartial, not showing favouritism. How the Recreation Coordinator communicates an intervention is also important. Anger should not be displayed openly and a punitive style will simply not fly with these participants. Embarrassing players or hobbyists is a non-starter, as is lecturing. Focus should be on the fact that a participant has broken a program policy or a team policy—*not* on degrading the child or making him or her feel ashamed. Simply remind the youngster that she has violated a rule that she agreed to follow and because of *her behaviour* (not because of your decision) and its violation of the rules, she has invited herself to pay a penalty. Such an approach focuses the responsibility where it belongs — on the rule violator — and helps to build a sense of personal accountability and responsibility.

12.2 TYPES OF ACTIVITIES TO INCLUDE

We recommend that every after-school session have some play and/or play-and-learn dimension to it. Team sports, individual games, games in pairs and groups, and hobby and arts and crafts skills instruction should all be incorporated into the program. To whatever extent possible, traditional games or activities indigenous to the culture of the participants should also be included, as should games and activities drawn from other First Nations' cultures.

12.2.1 - GAMES AND OTHER SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Recommended team sports include:

- floor hockey (winter)/field hockey (summer)
- volleyball (indoor or outdoor["sand" volleyball is also a great option])
- indoor/outdoor soccer
- softball/slowpitch (outdoor)
- tug-of-war (varying team compositions frequently)

Sports that can be done in groups but are more individualized and might require some lessons include:

Winter, Outdoor Sports

- snow-shoeing
- skating
- speed skating
- non-contact hockey (for boys and girls, or separated)
- cross-country skiing
- downhill skiing
- dogsledding (obviously, when the opportunity is available in the area)

Winter Indoor Sports

- swimming
- indoor track and field
- indoor jogging
- basketball
- volleyball

Summer/Outdoor

- golf (arranging a tournament after a set of lessons can be fun)
- tennis
- horseback riding

- horse-shoes
 - jogging
 - archery
- and on field trips,
- hiking
 - canoeing
 - archaeological digs
 - bush survival skill development
 - plant and animal identification

12.2.1.1 Warm-up Exercises

It is useful for adolescents to develop a keen sense of how to prepare the body for exercise and how to work out. Some stretching and warm-up exercises should always take place before any vigorous team sport. The basics of safe stretching and calisthenics should be taught. Some of the more common exercises include:

Breathing

Straighten back, close mouth and breathe in through the nose. The lungs should be filled as much as possible on the intake. Instruct the children to look down to watch the chest expand and to avoid filling the stomach by pulling in and down on the diaphragm. Tell them that filling their stomach with air has no benefits. The stomach cannot convey the oxygen into the blood stream and if the stomach becomes filled with air, it can be very discomforting. They should never hold their breath for longer than one second. Finally, tell them to exhale the air slowly and tuck their stomachs in to expel all the residual air.

Head Tilts

Ask the children to slowly bend their heads to the right and left to opposite shoulders and then return to the starting position. Tell them not to twist and turn the head. A variation on this is to tilt the head forward and backward, with the forward thrust involving the placement of the chin on the chest and looking down at the feet and the upward moment resulting in the eyes looking straight up. Repeat both five or six times.

Head Rolls

For about one-half a minute, slowly rotate the head around the shoulders to stretch the muscles.

Shoulder Shrugs

To strengthen neck muscles, ask the children to shrug the shoulders tightly, hold for a count of five and then drop to normal position. Repeat this up to five times.

Shoulder Stretches

Have the children interlock their fingers in front of their chests, turn the palms out away from the chest and slowly straighten their elbows, lifting their arms overhead. Stretch as far as possible without the stretch becoming painful. Hold for a count of five and repeat the stretch up to five times.

Shoulder Touches

This involves lifting the arms straight up overhead with palms in, then bending the elbows and touching the shoulders with the fingertips. It should be repeated up to five times.

Arm Stretches

Arm stretches are excellent ways to strengthen shoulder muscles and increase circulation. Have the Vision Seekers straighten their arms downward, along their sides. Keeping their elbows straight, have them slowly raise their arms sideways, away from the body to straight up overhead, reaching for the sky and turning their palms in. A variation of this exercise involves beginning with the arms down and then raising the arms backward, palms up as far as possible without pain. This should be repeated up to five times.

Arm Flippers

While they lie flat on their back with their knees bent, have the children extend their arms straight out to the sides and slowly raise the arms to touch in front of themselves. Have them keep their arms straight and the elbows locked. Repeat up to five times.

Arm Circles

Have the participants hold their arms straight out to the sides of the body, with elbows locked. First, they should rotate their wrists in circular fashion with hand rotations. They

should then begin to move their arms forward in small then larger circles. After one minute, reverse the direction of the circles, also for one minute's duration.

Wrist Twists

The participants should be asked to hold their arms in front of themselves with their palms up and their elbows touching their waists. Have them spread their fingers apart as far as they are able. Then have them rotate their wrists and palms inward to palms down, then rotate their palms again. This should be repeated as often as they are able for up to a full minute of exercise.

Wrist Curls

Have the kids place their arms on their thighs with their palms up and wrists extended over their knees. Slowly curl their hands up at the wrist, tightening at the end of the curl. At the end of the curl, turn the palms face out and slowly push the palms down, repeating the entire exercise five times.

Fist Gripping

This exercise involves sitting with hands extended and arms resting on the thighs. Fists are made and squeezed, then relaxed and the fist is released, with the fingers extending outward as far as possible. Again, have them repeat it five times.

Toe Touches

With one leg curled inward or formed in an outward scissor and the other lying on a 15 to 30 degree angle, and with arms outstretched and hands touching one another, bend the entire torso, including the head and the hands slowly towards the toes of the extended leg. Hold for 3-5 seconds and then repeat three times and reverse the extended/contracted leg couplet and repeat the exercise touching the other toes.

Twisters

While standing with legs slightly spread, bend the elbows and touch and hold the shoulders with the fingertips. Twist at the waist, rotating the upper torso in one direction, and then turn to the opposite direction. Do this for five movements in each direction.

Back Stretches

While sitting in a chair, place the arms along each thigh with palms down on the knees. Slowly bend at the waist so the torso is bent down to the knees. Hold for a count of five and then return to the starting position.

Crunches

Ask the children to lie flat on their backs, on exercise mats if you have them. With hands together in fists held on the chest, have them pull up their heads, neck and shoulders to an elevated position of six inches off the mat (or floor).

Half Butterfly Stretches

This exercise involves lying flat on the back, with legs together and hands outstretched. First raise the right leg to a 45 degree angle, then slowly move it to the left, turning your torso as you move your leg all the way until you toe or foot touches the floor. The other leg acts as a pivot and stays stationary. Repeat three times, slowly, then switch legs and do the same with the left leg. Some will not be able to touch the floor at first. After several tries, most will be successful. For a stiff body, even half turns are useful.

Scissor Kicks

This exercise requires the participant to lie on his/her side on a mat, with legs straight and together. The person slowly raises the leg resting on the one on the mat about fifteen inches or more, then back. Repeat this 5 to 8 times and then do the same with the other leg.

Place Kick

For this exercise, you should lie flat on your back and bend your knees so that the feet are also flat on the mat. Bend slightly at your waist so you can interlock the fingers behind your knee. Pull the knee slightly toward your chest, then extend the leg and point the sole of your foot toward the ceiling. Hold the extended leg for a count of five, then repeat for the other leg. Do it five times for each leg.

Leg Crosses

Have the participants lie flat on a mat with knees slightly bent, feet together, heels on the floor, and arms flat along the sides of the body. Have them bring one knee toward the chest and hold for a count of five. Repeat for the other leg. This should be performed for each leg up to five times.

Mule Kicks

Have the participants get down on the mat on all fours. Bend one leg, pulling it under the torso and then moving it slowly outward and upward until, finally, they should give it a slight kick to stretch it straight out and slightly above the back of their bodies.

Back Stretch Half Sit-ups

Lying face down (but off the mat), and hands at the palms down (on the mat) position, do a chest only sit-up, leaving the abdominal area (as much as possible) and legs flat on the mat. Stretch as high as possible, slowly stretching the back inward and the head and neck backward as far as possible. Then release the stretch, return the body to mat and repeat the exercise five times.

Isometric Exercises

Isometric exercises involve the contraction of muscles against resistance; in a sense, they are the opposite to stretching, and they provide the necessary balance demanded of the body when you stretch.

Heel Pushes

To help strengthen calf, ankle and foot muscles, ask participants to be seated in chair, removing their shoes and socks. Have them place one foot on top of the other foot with the heel of the top foot in the toe joints of the lower foot. Ask the group to pull up on the lower foot while gently pushing down with the upper foot. Hold for a count of five and alternate feet. Repeat up to five times with each foot.

Tip-toes

To help strengthen calf and ankle muscles, participants should stand while holding the back of the chair. They should stand up on the toes, holding the pose at the top of the heel raise for a count of five, then lower the heel to the floor, repeating the exercise five times.

Backward Ankle Presses

This exercise is to help strengthen calf muscles. Have participants lie on their stomachs while propped up on their elbows. One ankle should be placed over the other, using the top leg to provide minimal resistance. Have them try to raise the lower leg up toward the buttocks. Have them hold for a count of five and repeat for the other leg. This should be performed up to five times for each leg.

Kick Presses

This is a leg-strengthening exercise. It involves sitting in a chair, holding onto its sides, with legs crossed at the ankles. One ankle is placed on the top of the other ankle. The top foot should be used to resist movement and the individual should try to straighten out the lower leg. This should be held for a count of five, then the legs reversed. This should be repeated up to five times for each leg.

Cross Leg Presses

This exercise is intended to strengthen the thigh muscles. Have participants lie flat on a mat on their backs, keeping their feet and ankles together, bending the knees slightly. Have them raise one knee slightly towards their chests, and with their hands, press against their knees to resist movement. Ask them to hold for a count of five and repeat the exercise for the other leg. Perform this up to five times for each leg.

Leg Lifts

Have participants lie flat on the mat on their stomachs, arms straight down along the body, palms down. They should lock one leg straight and slowly raise the entire leg twelve inches. Then they should hold it for a count of five and repeat the exercise five times for each leg. The leg lift is intended to strengthen the rear thigh muscle.

Leg Squeeze

To help strengthen the inner thigh muscles, participants can sit in a chair, placing their balled fist between their knees and then press their knees together. This should be held for a count of five and repeated up to five times.

Knee Expander

To help strengthen the outer thigh muscles, the participants can sit on the chair, with knees touching. The palms should be placed on the side of the knees and the arms and hands should provide strong inward resistance. The individual should try to spread the knees against the resistance. Repeat this up to five times and each time hold the force-against-force for a count of five.

Chair Twisters

The chair twister is intended to help strengthen and stretch the lower back muscles. While sitting in a chair, one hand should be placed, palm up on the knee of the opposite leg. Hold

the hand on the knee with the other, free, hand. The exerciser should then twist at the waist, turning the upper torso and head toward the shoulder of the arm on the leg. Hold for a count of five and repeat up to five times in each direction.

Knee Grabs

This exercise is intended to help strengthen the wrist and finger muscles. While sitting, the exerciser should place the palms of the hands on the knees, squeezing each knee with the hands for a count of five. After five, s/he should open the hands and extend the fingers as far as possible, holding for a count of five. This should be done five times by each hand.

Arm Presses

Upper Arms: To help strengthen the upper arm muscles, the participants should sit in a chair with their elbows bent. The elbows should be placed against the back support of the chair and forcefully pressed backwards. This should be held for a count of five and repeated, as possible, five times.

Forearms: This exercise is intended to strengthen the forearm muscles. The exerciser should be seated, placing the forearm with the palm up along the thigh. S/he should hold onto the wrist with the opposite hand, then press down while trying to lift up the first arm. This should be held for a count of five. It should be repeated up to five times for each arm.

Palm Presses

To help strengthen the entire muscle group comprising the arm, participants should bend their elbow and hold their hands, palms down and one on top of the other, in front of their solar plexus, and firmly in position. With all of their power, press the bottom hand up and the top one down, holding for a count of five and repeating the exercise three times for each hand.

Shoulder Presses

This exercise helps strengthen the shoulder and upper back muscles. Have the participants place their left hands on their right shoulders and then, hold the position firmly. They should attempt to raise their shoulders against the hand pressure, holding the shoulder down. This position should be held for a count of five. They should alternate their hands and shoulders and repeat up to five times.

Head Presses

To help strengthen their neck muscles, participants should place the left or right hand with

their palm open flat against the same (left or right) side of the head. Providing resistance with the hand, they should try to push the head to the left or right side as appropriate, alternating sides. A variation is to press the front of the head directly into the palm of the hand and the back of the head into interlocked fingers. This should be repeated up to five times.

Finger Push-ups

Finger push-ups help strengthen the finger muscles. The participant simply places the palms together and pushes the fingers of each hand against the other. The palms are then pushed out while the fingers are brought down together to the centre. The participant should then return the fingers to the starting position. This should be repeated up to five times.

Chair Push-ups

To help strengthen the inner forearm muscles, while sitting in a chair, participants should grasp the armrests with both hands, with their elbows bent out. The arms should be straightened out while the body is pushed slightly up. They shouldn't push totally out of the chair. Then they should slowly return to the sitting position. This should also be repeated five times.

Side Arm Presses

To help strengthen the forearm muscles, the right arm should be bent at the elbow along the body and ball of the right fist. The participants should use the left hand under the balled fist to resist movement, trying to push down on the arm. This should be held for a count of five. Elbows should be alternated. Again, repeat five times.

Resisted Wrist Flips

To help strengthen the wrist muscles, participants should place their right forearm on their right thigh, with their palm down and extending over the knee. Another participant should provide light and minimal resistance by placing his fingers on the back of the active exerciser's palm. The hands should be moved up at the wrists with the resistance. This should be repeated ten times for each hand.

Palm Pushes

The palm push is used to strengthen the wrist muscles. One hand should be placed on the knee with the other hand across the fingers of the first hand. While pushing down with the top hand, the participant should pull up (not out) with the bottom of the hand. This should be held for a count of five and repeated up to five times.

Isotonic Exercises

Isotonic exercises involve having other people assisting with our stretches and our resistance. The following group will provide some variety and go a little way towards helping the participants bond.

Shoulder Hugs, with Resistance

This exercise helps to strengthen the shoulder and upper back muscles. With another participant providing slight resistance by standing behind the individual with hands lightly on his/her shoulders while doing the exercise, the person doing the exercise should perform shoulder shrugs.

Resisted Arm Circles

Have participants perform the warm-up arm circles but have someone assist by standing behind them and holding the hands lightly to provide some resistance. Have them do this five times in each direction.

Arm Stretches, with Resistance

This exercise helps strengthen the upper and lower back muscles, as well as the biceps. Have participants sit in a chair and have them extend the arms straight out toward their toes while bending at the waist. Have another participant stand in front with hands on the child's hands to provide resistance. Once the resistance is applied, have the participants raise their extended arms straight up overhead, repeating five times.

Resisted Arm Lifts

In this exercise, the arms are dropped straight down along the body. With elbows locked, slowly begin to raise the arms out sideways. A fellow Vision Seeker should stand behind, providing minimal resistance to the arms as they are raised. This should also be done for five repetitions.

Exercises for Cooling Down

The following are suggested as cooling down exercises:

Arm/finger Stretches

The participant should lock his/her fingers together in front of the chest, with elbows extended out front. The palms should then be turned down, then out and pushed out, while

the arms are pushed straight out. The final extension should be held for a count of five and the exercise should be repeated up to five times.

Shoulder Presses

Participants should sit in a chair and fold their arms across their chests. The elbows should be extended out front. The hands should be moved back toward the shoulder and the participant should attempt to grab his/her shoulders. This should be held for a count of five and then the grip should be released. The exercise should be repeated up to five times.

Swan Dive

While standing, the participant should grab her hands behind the back and interlock her fingers. She should slowly pull up and out on the hands, while keeping the shoulder blades together. She should stretch as far as comfortable and hold the extended stretch for a count of five. She should repeat the exercise up to five times.

Side Dives

While sitting or standing, the participant should grab his/her hands behind the back and interlock the fingers of each hand. S/he should then slowly pull up and out on the hands. Keep the shoulder blades together. S/he should stretch as far as comfortable, holding for a count of five. Repeat this up to five times.

Leg Pretzels

The participant should sit on a mat with legs out in front of his/her body. Have the kids then lift one leg, while bending at the knee and placing the leg over and on the other side of the lower leg with the foot flat on the floor and along the down knee. Hold the pose for a count of five. Reverse the position and repeat for the other leg.

Knee Spreads

Sitting on a flat surface, participants should bend their knees and bring them together so that they are touching. Then have them spread the knees as far apart as possible without pain. Hold for a count of five and repeat up to five times. A variation is to pull the ankles towards the crotch with the hands, with the knees spread, then hold the ankles and bend downwards at the waist.

Wall Pushes

Have participants sit with their backs straight, standing a little more than arm's length away from a strong wall. They should place their palms flat against the wall with their arms parallel to the floor. One leg should be placed slightly ahead of the other toward the wall. Then they should slowly bend the elbows and push in towards the wall until they feel resistance. This should be held for a count of five and then they should return to the upright position. Do this up to a total of ten times, alternating the inner leg.

12.2.1.2 Safety Measures To Take During Sports And Heavy Physical Activities

The Recreational Coordinator should ask him/herself *How do I prevent Vision Seekers from getting hurt during strenuous program activities?* Other critical questions include: *What do I do if one of the kids are hurt?* and *How should I protect myself and the program from liability in the event of an injury?*

Prevention

Injuries may occur because of poor preventive measures. Part of recreational planning should therefore include steps that ensure that the program participants have the best possible chance for injury-free participation. These steps should include the following:

- ☐ There should be an initial physical exam before playing any strenuous sports or participating in activities requiring a lot of exertion.
- ☐ Participants should be put through sufficient conditioning exercises in order to prepare them for the program's more strenuous activities and to determine which youths are ready to participate and which ones aren't.
- ☐ Equipment purchases should be "up to code," which means that they meet legal safety standards.
- ☐ Participants should be matched for physical maturity when they are doing competitive sports.
- ☐ Activities should be supervised and records should be kept of any minor injuries and behavioural problems.
- ☐ Water and bathroom breaks and warm-up and cool-down exercises should be allowed.

Minor Injuries

Although no injury seems minor to the person suffering it, most injuries are not serious enough to restrict participation, let alone being life-threatening. When the latter type of injuries do occur, of course, the Recreation Coordinator should take an active role in their initial treatment.

When one of the players has an open wound, the first thing the Coordinator should do is to put on a pair of disposable surgical gloves (which should be kept handy *along with the first aid kit, which is essential*) or some other effective barrier to the blood. The following instructions, presented as four steps, are addressed directly to the Recreation Coordinator.

1. **Stop the bleeding** by applying direct pressure with a clean dressing to the wound. Also elevate the wound if you can. The youth may be able to apply pressure him/herself while you put on the gloves. Don't remove the dressing if it becomes soaked with blood but, rather, place an additional dressing on top of the one already in place. If bleeding continues, elevate the injured area above the heart and maintain pressure.
2. **Clean the wound thoroughly** after the bleeding is controlled. A good rinsing with a forceful flow of water and a little scrubbing with soap will help prevent infection.
3. **Protect the wound** with sterile gauze or a bandage. If the youth is to continue participating in the activity, you should apply protective padding over the injured area.
4. **Remove and dispose of the gloves** carefully to prevent you or anyone else from coming into contact with blood.

Don't let a fear of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) stop you from helping a participant. You are only at risk if you allow contaminated blood to come in contact with an open wound, so the blood barrier that you wear will protect you from AIDS should one of the children carry the disease (which is most unlikely but possible).

For **bloody noses** not associated with serious facial injury, have the Vision Seeker sit and lean slightly forward. Then pinch his/her nostrils shut. If the bleeding continues after several minutes, or if the athlete has a history of nosebleeds, see medical assistance.

Bumps and Bruises

Use what some recreational coordinators, coaches and physical education specialists call the PRICE method if a bump or bruise is large and painful.

The PRICE Method

- P—Protect** the youth and injured body part from further danger or further injury.
- R—Rest** the body part to avoid further damage and to begin the healing process.
- I—Apply Ice** to the area in order to limit the pain and to reduce the swelling.
- C—Compress** the area by securing an ice compress or bag in place with a plastic wrap.
- E—Elevate** the injury above the heart level to keep the blood from pooling in the area.

Sprains and Strains

Injury to the muscles or tendons (sprains) or to the ligaments (strains) should also be treated with the PRICE method.

Serious Injuries

Ideally, both the Program Director and the Recreational Coordinator should be certified in appropriate first aid and CPR training. There are specific things to consider if a youth suffers a serious injury, including head, neck and back injuries or from fractures and injuries that cause a loss of consciousness. The first rule is that *you should not try to treat a youth with such an injury* but *you should plan what you will do if such an injury occurs*—and your plan should include the following guidelines to action:

- Obtain the phone number and ensure the availability to the program of ambulance, nursing, and/or local emergency response volunteers. Include this information as part of an emergency plan posted in several places in the facility you are using. If you are away from the facility, take it with you (or an alternative plan to suit the circumstances).
 - Assign an assistant or another adult the responsibility for contacting appropriate help if you are tied up with an injured party.
 - Do not move the injured youth.
 - Calm the injured youth and keep the others away from him or her.
 - Evaluate whether the youth's breathing has stopped and, if it has, administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or have a trained individual administer CPR, if the circulation is stopped.
 - Remain at the youth's side until the ambulance or professional help arrives.
-

12.2.2 - HOBBY SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Some useful examples of hobby and craft skills development activities that might be encouraged and assisted in the program include the following:

- Music lessons
 - Traditional, drumming and singing
 - Guitar lessons taught in a group
 - A cappella singing
 - Piano (or other instruments) taught individually
- Traditional beadwork classes
- Instruction in curing and tanning hides
- Instruction in cleaning hunted animals and fish
- Art classes (painting, drawing and sculpture)
- Indigenous peoples' studies (reading, watching films and videos, listening to audiotapes, talking to Elders and scholars).

12.2.3 - LIABILITY CONCERNS

So long as you follow the procedures described above, you should be protected against liability suits in cases pursued by disgruntled family members who are so upset that they blame you for the youth's injury after the fact. The following are some general guidelines:

1. Properly plan all your activities
2. Provide a safe physical environment with adequate and proper equipment that meets accepted standards.
3. Get consent forms from parents/guardians for all children who will be playing physically strenuous activities.
4. Have participants have a "physical" (a check-up from a physician) at the beginning of the year.
5. Match game players as much as possible by size, strength and maturity.
6. Participants should do "warm up" exercises before playing any strenuous sport.
7. Warn the participants of inherent risks in the sport.
8. Make sure that youth who are have a serious conflict don't "face off" (directly complete) against each other in a contact sport.

9. Supervise the activity closely.
10. Evaluate participants for injury or incapacitation.
11. Know emergency procedures and first aid.
12. Keep adequate records.

In addition to fulfilling these criteria, you should make sure your insurance coverage will protect you from liability in the event of a youth's injury.

12.3 SUMMARY

The recreation program is a critical element of the after-school program and, indeed, of the program as a whole. As such, it should not simply be the "fun side" of Vision Seekers but an important aspect of the entire individual and group development process.

In various ways, the recreational program should be "keyed" to other aspects of the program, complementing them, reinforcing them and, yes, sometimes providing relief from the "heaviness" or tensions produced in other parts of the Vision Seekers experience.

Reporting to the Program Director, the Recreational Coordinator must work closely with the Director. S/he must see that the program is continuously adjusted to the support the changing needs of the overall program.

The Coordinator must play various roles, including those of planner, leisure counsellor, instructor and coach.

The Recreational program methodology is organized around group activities, although some initial and ongoing one-to-one engagement between staff and the youth is essential.

Prior to any physically strenuous activity, participants should have warm-up exercises, and afterwards, they should be led through cool-down exercises.

Health and safety issues and liability concerns must be carefully addressed. Some protective guidelines have been suggested.

13.0 SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAM SUPPORT ELEMENTS

There are several other program support elements recommended for Vision Seekers that warrant description but which are not sufficiently complex to demand the dedication of a full chapter of space. Specifically, these are the *School Mentor* support program, the *Security Circle*, the *Special Needs Supplement* service and the *Vision Seekers' Information Exchange*. A description of each of these program elements is described in this chapter.

13.1 THE SCHOOL MENTORING PROGRAM

At the school or schools in which the participants are enrolled, a *Vision Seekers' Mentor* should be recruited (e.g., a teacher's aide, a Native cultural liaison worker, a teacher, guidance counsellor or physical education instructor) to work with each participant. These individuals will act in a supportive capacity with the individual during school hours, and help her with work related to his/her *Vision Quest* goals. Given the typically difficult relationship between young teenagers at risk and the school system, the Mentors will play a pivotal role in the overall program.

Careful screening of the Mentors is essential. The potential risks are great and many and Mentors whose reputations can handle challenges are preferred. There are considerable risks for the Mentors associated with their interactions with children who are often knowledgeable well beyond their years in sexual matters (although, typically, not in *safe sex*) and, in some instances, relatively sophisticated manipulators of authority figures and adults generally. Therefore, worldly-wise Mentors are required.

Further, the motives of the Mentors must be pristine; any evidence of child exploitation in the past should rule them out. With the assistance of the school principal and local social services and police authorities, a child abuse records check should be carried out on each Mentor who has not been carefully supervised through an employer organization, such as a school. In order to lower the risk and protect the Mentors from false allegations, very specific rules should be honoured regarding their interactions with children. For those children who are considered particularly manipulative and who, predictably, might utilize false physical or sexual abuse allegations as leverage with the Mentor to achieve some personal end, all such interactions should take place with more than one Mentor, or in the visible sight of others.

While each specific application of the Mentor program should be adapted to the specific needs demanded by variation in local circumstance, a set of general guidelines should help with the development and implementation of this element of the program.

Staff should not be too frustrated if the Mentor program cannot be realized at first. The program may have to "get its legs" and demonstrate its credibility and staying power before people commit their precious time. But considerable effort should be expended trying to get Mentors, for this element of the program can be the key to the long-term success in the personal development of each child.

13.1.1 - GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTOR PROGRAM

The following program development steps are recommended:

1. A clear set of goals for this program element should be developed by the committee or board initiating or overseeing the project.
2. Through a selection process assisted by a school principal (or principals, depending on the size of the program and where the children from the community go to school [on many reserves, children are bussed to several off-reserve schools]), potential mentors should be selected. Positive Mentor characteristics to consider in selecting the individuals, include the following:
 - the ability to listen carefully to what the child is saying with his/her words, emotions and body language;
 - evidence of thoughtful interest in the needs and well-being of children;
 - a non-judgmental attitude to situations and problems of the child;
 - the ability to demonstrate warmth towards other people;
 - the ability to act in relationship-appropriate ways, including not befriending nor acting in an authoritarian manner, but as a much older, caring and wise big brother or sister;
 - evidence of insight and awareness of self in relation to strengths and weaknesses;
 - by reputation, a respected and trusted figure amongst the children in the school.
3. The Mentors should then be given a group presentation describing the program and its goals and invited to participate. The screening process should also be identified, as should the risks of participation and the safeguards to be included as part of the program. Partially as an antidote to the "turnoff" created by the information about screening, the need for the program (the "message") should be presented with great enthusiasm and with emphasis placed on the importance of the program goals to both the children and the school, as well as to the community. Questions should be fielded and mentors invited to participate (It should be made clear that this is an *in-school* activity and after-hours commitments will not be requested). A list should be taken of those who are willing to volunteer. All of those who came out to the meeting should be thanked.
4. The Mentors who sign up should be screened through the records-checking process described above and those who have no apparent problems should be notified with an appropriate welcome letter and a personal visit from the Program Director.
5. A special group meeting should be held with the Mentors who are selected. The meeting organizer would review the program goals and the specific objectives of the mentor program element itself. The expected work involved in mentoring, the nature

of the expected relationship the Mentor will have with the children (see guidelines below). The individuals should be coached on how to ensure that they are not placed in compromising positions with the children. The group should be invited to special occasions involving the program and should get together to discuss issues and to socialize (have some "fun time") at least twice during the year and preferably more often.

6. The Program Director should contact the Mentors at least once monthly to give them support and to answer any questions they may have.
7. The Mentors should be asked to fill out a special questionnaire to help evaluate the program and the apparent progress made by the child they have participated with.

13.1.2 - GUIDELINES FOR MENTOR SUPPORT

The Program Director (or Coordinator) should provide regular encouragement and other types of support to each Mentor. The Director should also monitor the progress of the child and the relationship between the Mentor and the youth attached to the Mentor by talking to both on an infrequent but regular basis (e.g., once a month). The aim of the Program Director's interactions with the Mentors is to:

- encourage the Mentor to ensure that he/she sustains the initial commitment made to meeting the expectations of the mentoring role;
- secure ongoing information about the progress of the child in meeting his/her Vision Seeker goals and to secure general information about the overall social and physical health of the child that may be of value in assisting the child with personal development needs;
- "trouble shoot," i.e., to monitor the success of the mentoring relationship and, when and where necessary, intervene directly or through referrals to social workers or counsellors associated directly or indirectly with the program, in order to assist in the solution of problems and the overcoming of difficulties.

The mentoring relationship should involve the following activities:

- The Mentor and the child should meet for fifteen minutes at the beginning of each week and discuss a weekly plan for meeting Vision Seekers objectives. At the end of the discussion of the weekly plan, the Mentor should ask the child how the weekend went, if there are any special problems s/he anticipates during the week, and if there are any special things that can be done to work on the problem (an extra session, a discussion with the Vision Seekers' Program Director, or with a Counsellor). A meeting should be set up for the end of the week to review the progress the child has made in meeting his or her objectives.
- The Mentor should pay special attention to how the child is doing in school, taking the

time to seek him out and offer encouragement *vis-a-vis* Vision Seekers goals and other, more personal goals and situational difficulties he may be facing. The Vision Seeker should also be regularly encouraged to visit the Mentor if there are any special problems the child wants to discuss in private.

- If time allows, the Mentor should participate in one special activity per month with the child, whether that means going for lunch, to a recreational function, or tutoring in some specific academic subject area. In general, tutoring is the kind of function that should be arranged rather than directly assumed as a Mentor's ongoing responsibility. The commitment involved in tutoring is itself very intense and it involves distinctive goals that may clash with the other mentoring goals.
- Three times a year, at the beginning of the school term, at Christmas and at (school) year end, the Mentor should have a special meeting with the child and his parents or the Vision Seekers Program Coordinator (at least one with all three in attendance).

13.1.3 - REWARDING THE MENTORS

A thankyou letter should be sent to the Mentors once their active involvement with the child has begun. At year end, a special dinner should be held, at which Certificates of Appreciation should be handed out to each Mentor. The Vision Seekers should have a role to play in expressing their appreciation to the Mentors for their involvement. If your program can afford it, a tasteful gift would also be most appropriate. After all, the Mentors are volunteering their time and their role in the program is a vital one. At this time, the Mentors should be invited to continue their participation for another year.

13.2 THE SECURITY CIRCLE PROGRAM ELEMENT

The *Security Circle* element of the program has been included in recognition of the fact that children at-risk are often placed in unsafe situations with parents, siblings or playmates in which they need protective assistance. This element can be very significant for the youth, so if the reserve health service, school or urban community centre has the ability to arrange this element, it should definitely be arranged.

Children at constant personal risk may be suffering so much anxiety that they simply cannot benefit from a focussed social learning program such as Vision Seekers. The Security Circle system can bolster the child protection capacity of the community, create a sense of "we-ness" (i.e., "group solidarity" amongst program staff, the police and the children), and it helps the child, who often sees him/herself as a "problem" to other people rather than as an individual who has problems and who needs not only nurture but, at times, basic protection to overcome those problems.

In order to develop and provide this service, the Program Director and Recreation Coordinator should work together with any of the following, depending on who is locally

available: a reserve police officer; a representative of an RCMP detachment office; a member of the Ontario or Quebec Provincial Police, or a member of a county sheriff's office or state police.

As part of this program element, participants should be taught and counselled in ways to seek help. They should be shown how — and *encouraged* — to reach either the Program Coordinator or a designated security (police) officer when experiencing a crisis situation. Every couple of months, they should be reminded of the Security Wheel procedure and several small role plays should be facilitated so that everyone is clear about the procedure.

In discussing the Security Circle procedure, it is critical to help participants deal constructively with inevitable apprehensiveness about anticipated feelings of shame at not being able to handle high risk situations personally and betrayal of friends or family members in communicating information as part of the plea for assistance.

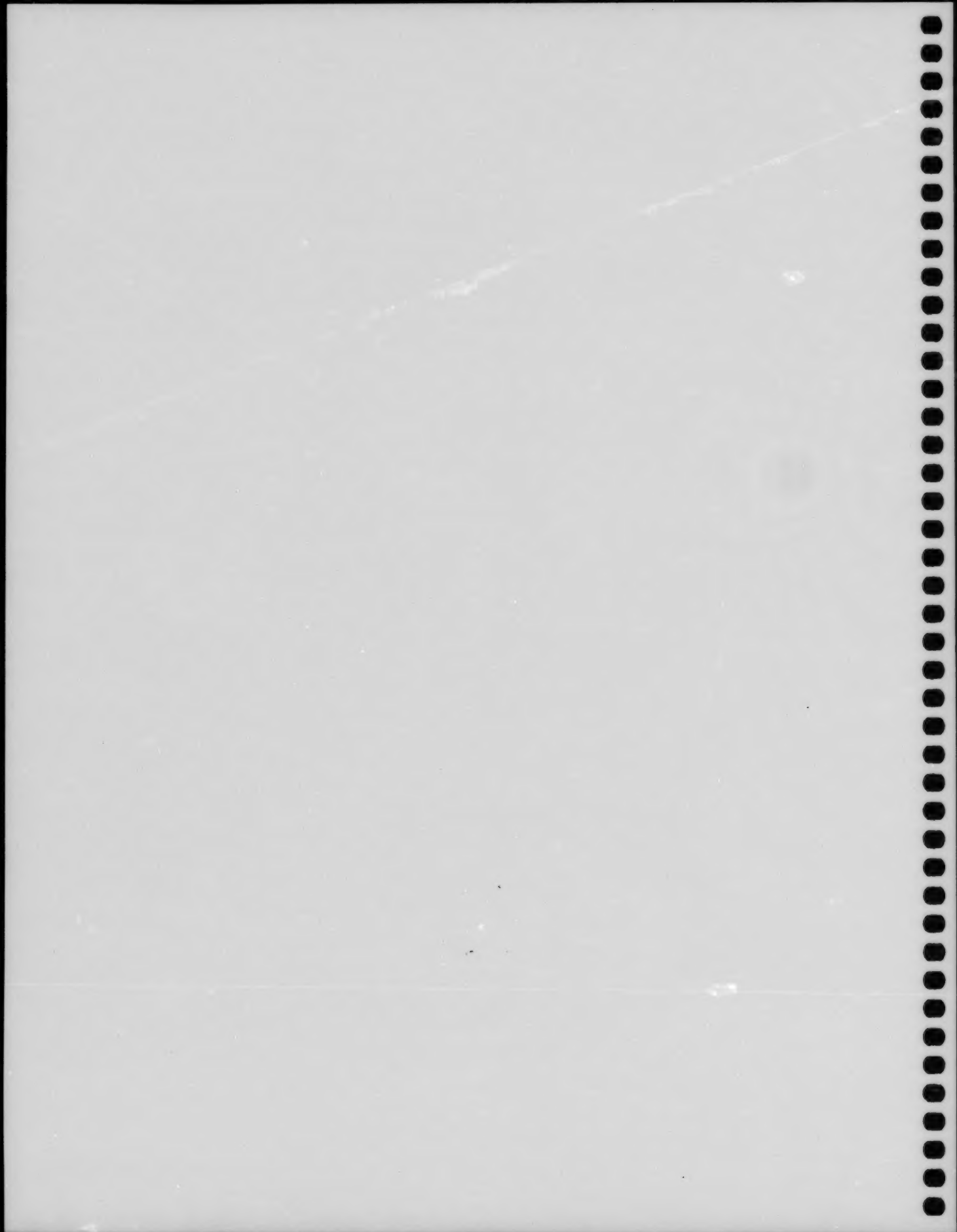
In dealing with these issues, there are essentially two considerations to promote.

First, the idea should be stressed that *all* people must turn for help at some time when troubles overcome them (Give examples of strong personalities from sport, etc.) and that it is a strength to admit this and not be afraid to expose that we have weaknesses—and remind them that they are still pretty young and deserve a little help when they find themselves in trouble!

Second, the idea should be stressed that all people have certain boundaries that must be maintained if they are to establish personal dignity and independence in the social world. The violation of those boundaries is not defensible—whether that violation is in terms of being goaded into criminal activity, solvent abuse, unsafe sex, sex with an adult, or being dared and pressured into an unsafe activity. Further, family and friends should understand the need to maintain those boundaries and they should be the last people to violate them. Such boundaries and the human right to maintain them should be underscored, as they are in some of the learning exercises.

A co-ordinated effort should be made to ensure that a contact person is always available to program participants when they experience a situation that they perceive to place them at extreme risk. The system should be coordinated with child protection officials, whether that be Provincial child welfare authorities or an Indian Child and Family Service (ICFS) Agency.

The emphasis in the Security Circle strategy should be on problem-solving, however, not simply the immediate safety of the child. Whether the situation calls for police intervention, child protection, or another kind of exceptional measure, priority consideration should be given to getting the people placing the child at risk to work on overcoming the issues that have drawn him or her or them to such inappropriate behaviours.



14.0 THE VISION QUEST SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE

Over the two year life of their experience in Vision Seekers, participants should be provided with at least one and, if practically possible, two nine-day (a working week plus two weekends) to one month summer camp experiences. The length of the camp will obviously depend upon the financial and human resources available to support and manage the camp program.

If practically possible, the summer camp should be managed and co-ordinated by the Program Director or the Recreation Coordinator, or by a specialized, highly experienced individual who can implement a plan prepared by the program staff. Having the full-time staff in charge of the camp has the advantage of deepening their relationship with the participants and getting to know them in a more full-rounded setting. An assistant and at least one senior teen or young adult program assistant per four participating children (e.g., students supported by summer employment grants would be particularly appropriate) should assist and, for all practical intents and purposes, the camp should be operated by *both* the staff and the children participating in the camp. The staff-to-camper ratio should remain about the same as for the after-school program.

The camp experience should be built around a traditional village or encampment, with organizational references for the camp arrangements made primarily to the culture of origins of the participants. In urban situations or in cases where the reserve community of origin contains a significant mix of aboriginal cultures, that mix should be reflected in the approach taken to designing the camp experience.

The camp should be held in an area remote from any modern settlement and, as far as the constraints of practicality and safety allow, it should be devoid of modern appliances. Ideally, the children should sleep in unison with the cycle of light provided by nature rather than according to manufactured schedule predicated on the use of electrical light and keyed to a clock.

The children participating should be expected to participate actively in camp decision-making, work, any hunting, fishing, or gathering that occurs, and the learning of traditional crafts, games and ceremonies. They should also have some solitary time available for reflection and meditation and camp staff and other campers should ensure that each child has access to their own "private space" when they need it. Last but not least they should have plenty of time for fun and games.

Planning is essential—absolutely essential!

A good deal of lead time and a formal camp plan should be prepared well in advance of the actual encampment, with great attention to detail. While this advice might seem to fly in the face of what one wants a camp experience to be, namely informality, spontaneity, and a sense of freedom, there is an interesting contradiction that reality tends to inflict upon this romantic conception.

Camp coordinators by the thousand agree that a basic rule of thumb for camp management might be stated as follows: *The more detail given to advance planning, the smoother and the more informal and relaxed is the camp experience itself!*

14.1 IDEA KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAMP PROGRAM

The following are some ideas that are recommended as principles to be followed in mounting a camp program that supports the overall goals of the Vision Seekers program:

1. *Facilitate Bonding Between Campers (as Campers) at the Outset*

Hopefully, a strong sense of attachment will have developed in the Vision Seekers group prior to the camp but the camp itself, at least first time around, is a new experience and because the children will have major responsibilities requiring cooperative work, their sense of bonding should be revitalized. In some situations, the summer camp may consist of more than one Vision Seekers' group. In that case, there is a need to use some exercises to help participants overcome their shyness and initial discomfort with strangers and to establish a sense of solidarity with each other.

The use of ritual to establish rules, to mark transitions, to encourage consensus and to grieve and heal was very much a part of virtually all traditional cultures. To help campers quickly establish a sense of solidarity, consider using the icebreaker exercises used in the after school program.

You may want to use an exercise that is often used in Native youth camps, and may have been traditional; it is called *Circle Greetings*. It was recommended as a useful exercise at the opening of the program and it fits in even better with the opening of the summer camp.

The Trust/Fall Exercise

Another especially powerful exercise for creating trust that is particularly useful for developing trust involves groups of eight to ten who undertake the "trust/fall" exercise. Each group act as a support unit for a volunteer who will close her eyes and fall backward into the waiting arms of the others. The taller and stronger members of the support group should be in position to lift the volunteer into the air and to catch the individual who is falling, with hands in position to catch the thighs, hips, back and shoulders. A team leader will blindfold the volunteer, wait a few seconds, then ask the volunteer to turn slowly around two revolutions and then stop. The group then picks up the volunteer, turns her around a few times in the air and then places her in an upright position on the ground. The volunteer is then instructed to place his faith in the group, whose members will catch her. She is instructed to relax totally, and then fall backward. The group catches the individual and then each of them hug the volunteer (still blindfolded), saying, *We're there for you. We're on your side! You're one with us!* Or words of similar meaning.

Hopefully, all group members will volunteer to be at the centre of the exercise and be blindfolded. Eventually, everyone in the group develops an enhanced sense of trust and reliance on the group and its individual members.

Human Knot

The Human Knot exercise is another way to get the idea of interdependence across. Using the same groups that you used in the Trust/Fall exercise or groups of a similar size, ask everyone to grasp someone else's hand in the group in an imaginative way, such as across the group, between the legs, behind the back, etc. When all hands are gripped, the group should be instructed to untie the human knot they have created and form a circle without breaking a single handhold. The group process can turn out to be hilarious. If you have more than one group, a race to undo their respective knots first can add a lot of fun to the exercise.

People to People

This is an excellent icebreaker that is a lot of fun. The group leader gets everyone to clap their hands in unison, repeating everything that s/he shouts out. Whenever the leader shouts "People to people," the group must mill about while maintaining the clapping rhythm and repeating the same phrase ("People to people") loudly. Once all participants have mastered the basic task, they're then asked to pair off.

The group leader then shouts "Now hand to hand," while demonstrating a right to left and left to right hand slap with the partner. The group repeats the phrase and mimics the action.

The group leader then says "Knee-to-knee" and everyone stops, then touches knees with the person closest to them, while repeating "And knee-to-knee."

The group leader then says "Toe to toe," and each player is shown how to cross right over left and left over right while repeating "Toe-to-toe," then "Friend to friend," with each pair doing a cross-over handshake with their partner, right over left, left over right) and "Foe-to-foe," each pair doing a sparring ritual, with elbows touching elbows, right over left and then left over right"

When the full four cycles have been repeated, the group leader starts again with "People to people" and then to "Knee-to-knee." When s/he begins the knee-to-knee cycle, participants are instructed to touch the knees of a new partner. The game can enhance the cycles by adding body parts, such as back-to-back or head to head or rump to rump. The final chorus ends with the rhyme, "And hand to hand, and toe to toe, and friend to friend, and foe to foe, head to head and back to back, give 'em a hug and let 'em go," with the participants following through bodily with the meaning in the verbal chant.

While the exercise is done a bit clumsily at first, if it is repeated in many sessions throughout the camp, the teens get pretty agile in carrying it out.

The Four-Fire Ceremony

A dramatic opening to the first night of camp that is appreciative of traditional spiritual symbolism is called the "Four-Fire Ceremony," which is drawn from the *Rediscovery Program's* collection of outdoor activities based on Native traditions (1996: 127-128). The exercise emphasizes awareness of self, unity with the group, and oneness with the natural world. The ceremony can best be described in steps:

- ▶ A site should be selected for the camp's council fire. Selection should be made by finding a central point of reference in the space taken up by the encampment.
- ▶ Four small fire sites should be selected along the cardinal compass points. All fires should radiate out from the centre at the same distance. A meadow, a beach, or sand hills or even a relatively open area of a forest are all suitable locations for this activity. The principal considerations are that the fires be properly contained in a way that they will not spread and that fire safety is maintained.
- ▶ The campers should be divided into four equal groups. Give four sticks of wood to each person.
- ▶ Next, each group should be asked to go to their initial fire site.
- ▶ Each group should be assigned an adult assistant. One staff member is appointed to each of the four "direction" fires, while a fifth adult (or older teen assistant) conducts the drumming from the council-fire site in the centre, which is unlit at this point. After spending five to ten minutes at their initial fire sites, all four groups should rotate clockwise at the sound of the drum.
- ▶ The staff should identify themselves as "Guardians of the Fire," each spending a few minutes describing, in a dramatic way, the characteristics of each direction, for each group that comes to their fire. Each of the four directions correspond with a different colour, element, and animal. The guardians might reflect this by wearing an appropriately coloured blanket and/or by painting their faces in the colour of their direction. A northern-fire guardian dressed in white robes and holding a large fan might greet the group of youngsters with a blast of wind and the words:

'Welcome to the North. My element is air. It is my wind that fans the flames [using a piece of cardboard or part of the blanket, actually fan the flames]. My wind also sets the waves in motion as it dances across the water. And it causes the trees to sway and it makes the snow drift. My animal is the buffalo and the polar bear. My colour is white. I am the home of the Northern Lights. I am the cold, strong, cleansing winds of the Arctic and the Plains in winter. Offer the North fire one of your sticks and a make silent promise to become like it: strong as the buffalo, pure as the snow, and joyful as the aurora that dances in the sky in the night. With me please observe a moment of silence while we each make our resolution.'

- ▶ After five to ten minutes of the Guardian's presentation and quiet reflection on the part

of the group, the staff member at the central council-fire site begins drumming as the signal for all groups to rotate clockwise. The procedure is repeated for all directions

'Welcome to the East. *My element is fire and my colour is red. You can see my colour in the distance, giving a red glow to the sky at early dawn, infusing the morning sun with warmth as it falls on your face. I am the fire in front of you. I am the energy from the sun absorbed by the trees, stored in the wood and then released to warm you as you stand around me here in the night. The eagle is my animal. Its freedom and the beauty in its soaring should inspire your spirits each day as you face my direction and greet the sacred dawn.*

'Welcome to the South. *My element is the Earth. [The guardian should hold up a handful holds up the soil, sand, or rock.]. Yellow is my colour. Yellow, like the golden sands of the seashore and deserts. I am a nurturer, the motherly body whose gravitational force draws objects toward me, the mother who nourishes the roots of plants and trees. My animal is the coyote, the clever one, the one that roams the Earth in search of rodents, fruit, and insects. I am the most curious one. Like you, my curiosity is never fully satisfied. In my unrelenting quest of knowledge, I crisscross many subjects of human concern and many parts of the earth.*

'Welcome to the West. *Black is my colour and my element is water. My colour is seen in the dark thunderclouds that sweep down out of the west. With my rain I renew the Earth's ability to nurture. [An effective ritual is to sprinkle the participants with a few drops of water.] I have the power to douse fire [demonstrate]. My element covers two-thirds of the earth and ninety percent of your body. Without water, the living on this earth could not exist. My animal is the bear, who is strong and protective and who emerges from the darkness of the den to renew its life each spring. I am the black of night. Without this dimming of the sun's light, we could not see and have our sense of connection with the stars and other planets.*

- ▶ When each group has visited all the (four direction) fires and presented their sticks as offerings, the direction guardians and participants carry a torch from their fire and gather at the council-fire site. Drums and songs accompany the procession as all campers converge together. The staff member who has been stationed at the council-fire site, drumming throughout the ceremony, welcomes all to the centre of unity. The drummer wears all four colours on his or her face and the same colours on a blanket.
- ▶ The wood of the council fire (prepared in advance) is now ignited with the flame of all four directions, as the torchbearers repeat the colour, element, and animal of each of their respective directions.
- ▶ Once lit, the council fire may be blessed or dedicated by an Elder or spiritual leader.

The Elder may choose to employ food offerings, smudgings (burning sage, cedar, or Sweetgrass and cleansing oneself with the smoke), songs, prayers, pipe ceremonies, or other culturally appropriate ceremonies. The council fire thus dedicated becomes a sacred site, the spiritual centre of the camp, the place for all to converge in a time of need. Harsh words must not be spoken here, nor ill will toward another be expressed. Garbage and cigarette butts must never be burned here. Many native people believe that there is a spirit that lives under the fire—one must always be careful not to offend.

Appropriate activities at the council-fire site include the sharing of songs, legends, and traditional dances, passing of the eagle feather, story telling, and closing Ceremony Night.

2. *Use the Camp Experience to Teach Traditional First Nations' Games*

An emphasis on aboriginal games is encouraged in the organization of the camp program. The games can be cross-cultural (borrowed from many first cultures) or local only. A long list of possibilities are available in Thom Henley's *Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways, New Directions* (1996), which is strongly recommended as a companion piece to the two volumes describing Vision Seekers.

3. *Use the Camp Experience to Teach Story-Telling (The 'Storyline' Exercise)*

Traditional First Nations' cultures were based upon oral communication and oral history, which involved the passing of all knowledge, both necessary and simply pleasurable, from one generation to another. Verbalization is thus a core cultural skill as well as a general human communication skill for the first peoples of the Americas. Acquisition of the skill of story-telling and careful explanation is thus a core traditional skill.

A good story told around the campfire by a skilful and seasoned storyteller is actually a favourite of most young campers. The setting itself, with the hypnotic flickering of the fire, sets a captivating stage for a good tale. Not everyone is lucky enough to develop their own storytelling skills, yet clearly this skill was very much a part of the oral cultures born by the peoples whom, prior to the Europeans, lived in what is now Canada. An exercise called "Storyline" can serve to revitalize that traditional skill. It makes everyone in the fire circle a storyteller; it helps encourage self-confidence, public speaking skills, and helps overcome group shyness.

There are a variety of ways to conduct a Storyline. A good way to start is to have each person in the circle add a sentence or even just three or four words to a story as it moves around the campfire circle from person to person (The story must move along quickly or it loses its vitality and the Camp Director or an experienced storyteller should keep it moving). It must flow as if one person were telling it, however, because spontaneity is the key to its success.

Another way to conduct Storyline is to have each person in the circle announce a favourite movie or television theme, e.g., comedy, historical epic like *Dancing with Wolves*, a western, science fiction, a biography, soap opera, musical, adventure, cartoon, news broadcast, sporting event, talk show or game show. Each person then tells their portion of a group story in that particular style. A time limit of ten to twenty seconds can be set for each person to talk before the leader moves the story to the next person in line.

Another variation on a Storyline involves all participants choosing a favourite personality or character that they can mimic. Possibilities for this run the gamut from Native political leaders through cartoon characters to Hollywood stars, or sports stars. The best characters, of course, are those most readily recognized by the group.

Sometimes the best way to conduct the Story Line is to forget the line altogether. Just let the story pass at random across the circle. This way, a participant that's really inspired to respond can do so spontaneously without having to wait for a set turn. The person who wants to jump in can simply stand up and take over from the previous speaker.

Over the duration of the camp, all three variations or other variations that the staff know of or the participants invent might be tried. Everyone should be encouraged to try leading the Storyline, although if a child has great anxiety about leading, his or her dignity should not be violated by pushing too hard—and don't allow any ridicule or goading. A technique that psychologists call "systematic desensitization" can be borrowed from the program Counsellor to establish a way to gently and gradually draw the anxious youth into the story-telling process. Such little victories can be life-changing events.

A final comment: Humour should be encouraged as part of the Storyline. It really is a lot of fun.

Talking Stick

Another excellent exercise for a Vision Seekers camp is called *Talking Stick*, and involves the use of a traditional technique to show people how to do things that they are typically too nervous to do. For example, if a shy person must speak in front of a group, their hands will often go into their pockets or be raised to fix their hair. Sometimes the hands move around awkwardly, seeking some place to scratch, or they move to loosen a shirt button, then go back in their pockets. In short, the shy person is using his hands to divert the attention of the watchful eyes surrounding them from their whole body or their face. Yet if that same person is given an object to hold while speaking, he will probably forget about what to do with his hands and concentrate more on what they want to say.

In traditional (non-industrial) cultures, seemingly inanimate objects were seen to have special powers. "This is a talking feather," the leader tells the group around the fire on the first evening. "It is a very special feather because it will give you the power to speak. Specific rules must be observed when holding this sacred feather. Only the person holding the feather may speak. You must speak the truth. You must speak from the heart. The feather must

always be treated with respect and it must be passed clockwise around the circle."

In many indigenous North American cultures, such a system was used traditionally for group sharing. Chiefs still hold a talking stick when addressing a group. Different objects can be used and they should be chosen with reference to the heritage of the campers. However, any object can be imbued with "talking powers" once the group recognizes it as such. This very lesson can be used to show that cultures are living, changing phenomenon: They are what human beings invent to survive and thrive and they change in response to practical need. They are not simply the old "ways" and relics frozen in time.

4. *Use the Camp Experience to Role Model Exemplary Behaviour*

The behaviour of the camp staff should reflect positive interpersonal and leadership styles, as well as an active and open curiosity to learn. Children's positive behaviours during the day or previous evening should also be singled out for praise at the evening council fire. At the end of the camp, the Director should call each participant forward before the group as a whole and highlight the special accomplishments of each child, perhaps giving each a small gift. For some youngsters this marks the first time in their lives they have received public recognition for positive traits.

5. *Encourage Campers to Use the Experience to Gain Social Responsibility and Insights into Community Administration*

All campers should be involved in certain chores, such as making meals, doing dishes, chopping firewood and gathering kindling, tent and building (if there are any buildings) clean-up, and grounds maintenance and clean-up. A choice should be made through a consensus-building process regarding whether or not a traditional or egalitarian division of labour should be established around the distribution of chores by gender. Again, this provides a useful way of confronting the youth with the difficult challenge of making cultural choices while respecting tradition. Staff should be ready to point out *why* a division of labour that differs from tradition may be appropriate in an industrial, market-based, liberal-democratic society.

Campers should also have their own chores, such as washing their clothes, making their own beds.

Specialized work roles should also be assigned, such as *Fire-keeper*, *Mediator*, *Main Story-teller* (who would facilitate camp fire story-telling), *Singers* who would do traditional songs as well as leading evening sing-songs; even leadership roles might be assigned.

While certain ground rules should be established by the Program Coordinator in advance and the Camp Director at the outset of the camp, the campers should also form a decision-making council that deals with issues and makes most of the decisions about camp maintenance and special activities.

6. *Use the Experience to Teach Some Basic Practical Skills*

The troubled youngsters who are in the Vision Seekers program will often lack very basic skills, from those pertaining to personal hygiene to various interpersonal skills and practical skills. The camp is an excellent place to learn these skills, through topics discussed at the council fire to one-on-one advice and skill demonstrations by staff, assistants, Elders and each other. Expectations of sharing and courtesy, how to tie a knot, chop wood, eat nutritiously, use the stars as a directional guide, and to read the various signs that speak from the forest are all things that lend themselves to practical teaching in a camp setting.

7. *Participants should Explore Nature and the Traditional Respect First Peoples had for Nature*

The camp is also an excellent place to teach basic lessons about why human beings should respect nature, about ecology and about the ways that First Nations traditionally relied directly upon nature for survival—and the fact that, even modern societies ultimately depend wholly upon the workings of nature.

8. *Traditional Crafts and Survival Skills can also be Taught in the Camp*

With the assistance of a knowledgeable woods person familiar with Native survival cultures, the camp also offers an excellent place to teach hunting techniques, gathering techniques (and what can be gathered), horticulture techniques and fishing. In areas where woven baskets were used, that skill can also be taught. The experience of learning about these skills may not produce much skill in the participants themselves but it will surely enhance their respect for and pride in their own traditional cultures.

Other activities of value to the camp experience include the following:

- the teaching of first-aid and CPR;
- consultations with an Elder
- Sweat Lodge ceremonies
- joke-telling (around the campfire)
- canoeing
- swimming
- team sports
- endurance challenges
- group projects

Be Realistic! These Youth Have Grown Up In The Modern World And They Have Modern Attention Spans

It should be noted that participants will *not* be traditional youth, however, and their needs are very much shaped by the nature of their socialization. Children need "equivalents" to the type of stimulation provided by the electronic media and other elements of their daily reality. They don't have to have video games but they will get bored unless the experience is fast-paced, lively and fun. This does not mean that they cannot benefit from more contemplative activities but it does mean that they will get bored, rebellious and provocative *if* their needs are not met. So more common, modern games such as baseball, soccer, volleyball, etc., are excellent additions to the program—as are trips to observe nature, view historic sights or nearby museums, and to participate in available commercial entertainment. But keep the "modern" stuff in balance: Don't let it overwhelm the experience. Nature, meditation, personal development and group-building should remain the primary themes in the experience.

14.2 THE VISION QUEST CONCEPT

In many aboriginal cultures, the Vision Quest was used traditionally as a rite of passage into adulthood and, therefore, it is recommended that the participants culminate their camp activities with that very challenge or a challenge akin to the Vision Quest experience. Great caution will have to be exercised to ensure that these survival experiences are safe for the participants. Local circumstance will dictate what is and what is not safe. Extensive planning and consultations with parents and health and safety and child welfare officials — and, inevitably, with an insurance agent — should be undertaken to secure appropriate advice regarding how to manage the child's safety during the Vision Quest experience.

The Vision Quest usually involved an isolated venture into a wilderness area away from other people and under the guidance of a wise Elder who was gifted as a Holy Man or as a person with special knowledge. If your project board is willing to challenge the child to an isolated wilderness venture, the Elder or Holy Man selected to give guidance should be wholly familiar with the Vision Seekers program and its goals and should be fully committed to the obligations of the program to ensure the safety of the children.

It is expected that, in most instances, specific sites would be selected, either a single destination site and route or a group of sites that would constitute a planned journey. Along this path, spotters should be strategically placed to monitor the youth's progress. While the Vision Quester should not be able to see the camp leaders or spotters, his or her location *must* be monitored to ensure safety. The sites themselves should be chosen with safety in mind. For example, they should not be vulnerable to bear (or other predator) attacks; they should be behind high tide lines, etc.

The children should be given the option of the Vision Quest experience and anyone who decides not to participate or finishes before its completion should have their choices respected. For those who choose the Vision Quest, it will be undertaken at the end of their

second year (i.e., in the second camp) of participation. The staging of the Vision Quest is actually tied conceptually to the unfolding of the learning experiences over the two years of the program and is really the culmination of the program.

Only minimal supplies should be provided to the Quester, such as some basic foods and water, some matches and a jack-knife. The Quest should be arranged so that the final day involves a fast.

Each child embarking on the Vision Quest should be briefed in detail. The child's program goals should be reviewed and a discussion should take place regarding how s/he wants to use the contemplative time to think about how realistic these goals are, what will be required to realize them, and to renew their commitment to the goals.

In situations where monitoring from a distance is simply not realistic or is not sufficiently safe for the Vision Quester, an adult who is familiar with the realities and, especially, the risks of the wilderness area, might accompany the child — i.e., maintaining some contact and at least having the child in close proximity at all times, but only sometimes in sight of the child — and assist the child under the direction of the Elder or Holy Man.

Ideally, each youth should be directed on a (sacred) circular journey familiar to the Elder and program staff, with basic shelters or tenting sites along the way, and not in sight of the other Vision Seekers.

To completely avoid significant health and safety issues, the Vision Quest can be structured as a sort of week-long "boot camp" exercise involving the entire group but with specific periods of isolation. Exhausting physical challenges such as long distance hikes and group exercises, sleeping under the stars (with an adult sentry guarding the camp), sparse, nutritious meals, cleansing herbal teas, a Sweat Lodge, fasting, practising silence, and individual meditation could be part of the experience.

Fasting should be done under careful instructions. During the final day, on which there is a fast, the child should be instructed to stay up when it is dark, contemplating and meditating or praying for a vision of what his mission and goals in life should be. When the sun comes up, the child should be advised to sleep if s/he is tired. The suffering endured stimulates the visioning process. It humbles the individual in relation to nature, thus encouraging an understanding of the place of one's vision in the circle of life.

It is important for the youth to be instructed to attempt to remember everything his or her meditations and dreams present, for only with considerable detail can a reasonable interpretation be made. The child might be asked to keep a diary and jot down notes to summarize the experience and the key thoughts that have occurred.

After the completion of the Quest, the individual youth is greeted by the other campers and the camp staff and (potentially) the parents. Warm food should be prepared and provided to the child. The Vision Seeker is assisted in the interpretation of his thoughts and dreams by the Holy Man (or Camp Elder or Director) who helps the youth with establishing his life goals by interpreting the dream and the vision. The Holy Man may take the youth into a Sweat

Lodge upon the completion of the quest.

Sometimes after beginning the quest, the Vision Seeker will be discouraged by fear of the dark, by animals or by anxieties arising out of childhood fears. There is no shame in not completing the quest; there will be another opportunity if the child sticks with the program—or other opportunities in life. There should be no ridicule tolerated of the child who cannot complete the Quest.

Girls should have their Vision Quest alone in a teepee or Lodge for four days. The Quester should be given little to eat and should be instructed by an older woman regarding a set of tasks to be completed during the four nights. Throughout the quest, older women and a female Program Director or Camp Assistant should visit the Quester occasionally to help her think through her meditations and her quest. After the quest, the other campers, the program staff and other members of the child's family should celebrate her completion of the quest.

14.2.1 - ALTERNATIVES TO THE VISION QUEST

It is expected that, in most instances, camp organizers will not feel entirely comfortable with organizing a solitary quest in an outdoors area. That is nothing to feel awkward about! It is far better to err on the side of caution. After all, these are pretty young people. But do remember, a dramatic challenge experience can exert a powerful, positive influence on a child who is heading for a life of missed opportunity and personal troubles. So you have to weigh the risks very carefully.

It is expected that a common solution will be to create a situation of meditative isolation but under the constant eye and full control of camp organizers and/or a Holy person. Along with the isolation, fasting and meditation, however, a challenge should be provided. Possible examples include the following:

- the participant might do a long-distance run/walk (e.g., for 15 miles), followed by a three and one half day fast and meditation;
- the participant might make a commitment to walk or swim a certain distance over the life of the Vision Quest, with at least 4 hours of meditation between exercises;
- the participant might go on several day-time journeys, during which s/he will write down all his or her bad experiences in the past on pieces of paper, then roll them up and put them in a waste paper basket. After each return from the journey, a reception group in the camp or an Elder or Holy Man should then ritually burn the old, "bad stories", and the participant should spend a day rewriting or retelling a new story with specific expectations of what s/he might become. The child should then share the story with the Elder or Holy Man.

14.3 SUMMARY

The Vision Quest camp experience forms an important part of the overall program and it requires considerable advance planning. Health and safety must be priority concerns. If possible, the full-time staff should serve as leaders of the camp (with some assistants) but, as part of the program, much of the daily and special event decision-making, as well as how to deal with ongoing issues and challenges should be determined by a membership Council. The camp should have an Elder participate. The camp is an excellent place to learn practical personal and physical skills, to learn about and gain respect for the environment, enhance one's store of knowledge and deepen one's respect for traditional means of living. It is also a place to gain and practice social responsibility. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the camp should be fun—and overloading the itinerary with “lessons” of any kind, including traditional culture, may turn the participants off!

The camp is also a place for staff to see the Vision Seekers in a broader context, and to better get to know them. In this way, advice and intervention can be far better tuned to the child's actual wants and needs.

The Vision Quest experience is a powerful traditional rite of passage. It serves as an excellent activity to culminate a young teen's two year's of participation in Vision Seekers. However, all participants may not be ready for it, and there should be no ridicule tolerated for those who choose not to embark on such a quest. Extreme care must be given to ensure that safety factors are taken into account when organizing these experiences. Safe alternatives are also possible.



15.0 EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

Evaluating your Vision Seekers project may seem a very secondary aspect of the overall program and, in truth, it will never make it to the primary "do it" list of anyone directly connected to the program's operational activities, which are, after all, the essence of youth programming. Yet evaluation is important, *very* important, to the success of your project. If you think about it, evaluation — at least *informal* evaluation — is a fundamental aspect of all human activity. Inevitably, you will have to evaluate your program as a whole, the progress of its participants, the performance of your board and staff, the degree to which it achieves acceptance and receives support in the community from both the leadership and general membership.

Evaluation is inevitable, at least informally; it is part of how human beings function in their ongoing attempts to achieve progress rather than failure. Evaluation helps us by identifying strengths and weaknesses, discovering mistakes and learning from them, and protecting ourselves and the organizations we cherish from misdirected criticism.

15.1 THE REASONS TO CONDUCT A FORMAL EVALUATION

In addition to the challenge of avoiding the loss of financial support for the program by complying with the demands of a funding agency, there are several reasons to formally evaluate as part of the Vision Seekers project.

Formalization of evaluation should simply involve an effort to link the goals of the project to ongoing inquiries, discussions at meetings, and specific measures of strength and weakness, success and failure. So rather than seeing evaluation as just a chore to be carried out to meet the criteria of a funding agreement or simply as a sort of last minute housekeeping task, aspects of evaluation should be consciously built into the ongoing process of program administration. By keeping records of the outcomes of your evaluative deliberations and by developing measures of progress in advance and taking and recording the calculations based on those measures, you will have much of what you need to prepare evaluation reports for various reasons at successive points of the program's life.

From the perspective of a project or program and in addition to self-defence (i.e., against resource cuts or the termination of funding) the following are specific reasons why evaluation can be important:

A formal evaluation affords an opportunity to take stock of what we are doing and why we are doing it. As the stewards of a program, sometimes we want to take stock of *what* we are doing in our programs, to evaluate our *efforts*; in other words, we want to evaluate the kind and quantity of activities we have undertaken to satisfy our program objectives—and whether we, as managers or staff, are satisfied with the type and quality of activities and services that comprise our overall activity schedule.

Evaluation supports informed planning and program implementation: A third reason to evaluate is to support the planning process. We do this by assessing the suitability of our

policies and practices, determining the extent to which staff practices adhere to predefined designations of responsibilities and function, and evaluating how well the program is organized. Such information provides a basis for improving program efficiency.

Evaluation demonstrates financial accountability: Another reason we should evaluate a program is to assess the consistency, dependability and accuracy of our records of program expenditures, allocations of resources and the equitability and suitability of the treatment we provide to service users; in other words, we might evaluate to establish the financial accountability of the program.

Evaluation concretely assesses the program's achievement of goals: A particularly important reason we should formally evaluate is to consider the effectiveness of the program or, in other words, to assess whether or not and the extent to which program goals are being achieved. In this type of evaluation, identification of the objectives and their measurement is of primary importance.

Formal evaluation assesses our efficiency: Another basic reason to formally evaluate the Vision Seekers program is to assess its efficiency or, in other words, to find out if there is a good match between our allocation of financial, material and human resources to the goals we have set. We may want to know how economical the program is in achieving its goals. Several questions present themselves. Are there more cost-efficient choices? Could savings in time and costs and therefore additional services be provided within the same resource and time framework? Could alternative programs or activities be designed or selected to achieve the same results at lower cost?

Evaluation affords an assessment of the wider impact of Vision Seekers: Another reason that we might want to evaluate our service is to assess its impact beyond program/project goals. Generally, this aspect of an evaluation is concerned with the overall impact on the targeted client group or the actual users of the service. However, it might also focus on the larger context of the community, including its impact on the social and health service agency network. It yields evidence to answer the question: Does the existence of the program aid that network in its efforts to better satisfy the needs of the target group? Board and staff might be interested in assessing the *unanticipated consequences* of Vision Seekers, whether that is positive or negative—and thereby make appropriate adjustments.

Evaluation can provide an assessment of the needs of clients to see if they need additional support to benefit from the programme: Another reason to evaluate is to determine, independently of formal program/project goals, if and to what extent the client needs are being met—as determined by either (a) the perceptions of the clients themselves or (b) criteria apart from the program's own conceptual framework.

Evaluation helps to explain success or failure: If we are particularly concerned about the relative effectiveness of the various activities or services in our program or project in terms of meeting one or all of the program's goals, we might want to use our evaluation to focus on explaining effects, identifying causes of effects, and generating generalizations about program effectiveness.

Evaluation affords a sharing of knowledge with providers of similar services: Another reason to evaluate is to provide data of benefit to potential or actual program users, such as data on effective services or activities vs. not-so-effective aspects of the service. The sharing of this type of information facilitates the general development of a base of relevant knowledge and expertise in community-based promotion, prevention, and early intervention for children and youth at risk.

Evaluation provides legitimate feedback to the funding agency: Yet another reason to evaluate is to give feedback to the funding agency regarding program strengths and weaknesses to suggest plausible changes that could improve the effectiveness of other, similar projects seeking funding.

The most fundamental and overriding reason to undertake a formal evaluation process is to **facilitate intelligent judgements by decision-makers**, including not only the funding agency and immediate program sponsors, managers and staff, but also decision-makers in other locales who may want to borrow upon or extend the program model as a responsible, organized means to address similar problems.

15.2 TYPES OF EVALUATION YOU MIGHT WANT TO USE

There are three *categories* of evaluation that are immediately distinguishable. One of these methods can be referred to as *process evaluation*, which involves assessing *how* a program was implemented and determining *if* and *how* the manner of implementation contributed to the ongoing efficiency and quality of staff performance and relations between staff, clients and the community. Process evaluation is built into the ongoing operations of a program and is central to its functioning.

Another method of evaluation can be referred to as *outcome evaluation*, which is solely concerned with measuring the success or failure of a program or program activity and determining the factors that contributed to its relative success. By definition (i.e., "relative" success), outcome evaluation is also concerned with determining what contributed to its failure.

A final approach unique to the applied social sciences is called *action research* or *participatory research*, which is distinguished both by the fact that it combines *both* outcome and process research and the fact that it makes the subjects of the research — the board, staff, supportive personnel, Vision Seekers and their parents/guardians — the investigators of the research problems at hand. Initially developed by the social-psychologist Kurt Lewin, this approach treats the goals of a strategy or program as a set of hypotheses and the subjects of the research as the people who set the goals and who modify the strategy or program on the basis of self-evaluation. From program planning through implementation to evaluation, the people implementing the research and, at times, the actual clients of the program, are actively involved in the process. This concept turns the usual notion of scientific research on its head,

namely the idea that those doing the investigation must be separate from the research process, detached, in order to undertake objective *disinterested* observations rather than being directly involved as subjects. Such research has been incorporated into many successful community development projects not only because it directly involves those affected most by the activity being studied but because it is particularly sensitive to the emergence of problems and because people doing the research have a commitment to not only making the project work in the particular way that it was originally conceived but to making the project work no matter how much modification may be necessary.

It is recommended that elements of each of these approaches be included in any evaluation research that you undertake, whether for the purposes of continuous monitoring or in order to complete a long-term evaluation of the program's functioning.

15.2.1 - 'PROCESSEVALUATION' (WITH 'BUILT-IN' PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH) AS AN ONGOING FEEDBACK METHOD

At the outset of programme preparation, it is important that you consider how you are going to evaluate and what you are going to have to do to ensure that evaluation is an ongoing part of programme operations. To honour the concept of participatory research, you should ensure that the program goals and objectives achieve consensus amongst the board, staff, community leaders and parents. These people should ultimately be involved in the evaluation process and their input is critical to the success of the program.

You will also want to prepare during the pre-operation phase by developing standard reporting forms as well as simplified forms for describing the progress of participants towards their goals and their success in participating with the staff and other participants. Forms for referrals, for exit interviews for staff and participants, alumni follow-up interviews should also be prepared, as should forms for interviewing parents.

Regular monthly staff meetings that have evaluation as a central aspect of the proceedings should be held, with reports and discussions related to objectives and activities, including participant statistics. The minutes of these meetings should be saved for a long-term (5-year) evaluation.

Exit interviews should not only be conducted with successful graduates and their parents but with drop-outs to determine what the problem was. Staff observations of the drop-out situation should also be recorded and the record maintained. These data will help to determine what program areas need modification, whether that is parental support, peer relationship mediation, or more stimulating or individualized program contents.

You should consider holding regular board/staff meetings, even if only semi-annually, to deal with program goals and objectives, community feedback, concerns, evaluation results, and to develop joint commitments to required program modifications.

You should also consider conducting an annual review of program objectives, workplan and documented achievements, to modify the goals and objectives, the work(action)plan, and the

reporting system.

These "documented achievements" should be based upon the conducting of interviews at least once a year with the participants, their parents, Mentors, the Counsellor and, perhaps, the guidance counsellors at the schools the participants attend. The product of these interviews can give an excellent source of ongoing monitoring data to determine how well the program is really doing.

15.2.2 - CONDUCTING A LONG-TERM EVALUATION

If you undertake to do a long-term evaluation for internal planning purposes or to meet the requirements of a funding agency (and, hopefully, for both), all of the documented evaluation work you have conducted as an ongoing part of the program will become useful, core data, providing facts which assist in asking the most fundamental questions about the strengths and weaknesses, failures and successes of your Vision Seekers project.

In a long-term evaluation, there are obviously many questions that you might want to ask about how well your Vision Seekers programme is working but most of them can be categorized as a specific example of one of the following:

1. In terms of organization and program components, how closely has the programme followed the guidance in the Vision Seekers text and exercise manual (Volume 2)? If there is a wide divergence between the manual and your programme, how do you explain the disparity?
2. How effective has the board or oversight committee been in guiding the program? Try to identify both positive and negative factors impacting upon the oversight group's effectiveness or lack thereof.
3. How effective have each of the staff been in performing their roles, as defined in their job descriptions?
4. How effective have the external human support roles been performed (i.e., the Mentors, guest speakers, community leaders, Elders, volunteers, etc.)?
5. Does the program sequencing of themes "fit" with the needs of your participants? If not, what changes have you made (or should you make) to improve the fit?
6. What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of the program's involvement with parents of the participants?
7. In their own views, how successful have the participants been in achieving the goals they have set for themselves?
8. In the views of the staff, how successful have the participants been in achieving the goals?
9. According to formal assessments of the consulting psychologist or counsellor, how successful have each of the participants been—and the participants as a group?

10. According to the opinions of parents or caretakers, how has the behaviour of their participating youth changed (and to what extent can they attribute that change to the programme)?
11. How cooperatively do staff work together in operating the program?
12. What is the graduation rate for the program? How satisfactory is this rate?
13. What is the drop-out rate? How satisfactory is this rate (You should make some relevant reasonable comparisons [also for Question 12 above])?

15.3 DECIDING WHO SHOULD DO THE EVALUATION

The degree of expertise needed to conduct your evaluation will depend upon the purposes to which your long-term evaluation will be put. If there is considerable internal questioning that has led to conflict or if it is essential for future funding that you have an objective, independent evaluator, you may want to hire an independent consultant to ensure a high degree of expertise and credibility with a funding agency. You may want to enlist the research services of an existing program planning agency at arm's length from both the program and the government. Or you may simply want to acquire the voluntary services of a steering committee, which would in turn seek out the services of some local teachers and/or other workers to conduct the evaluation.

Your ongoing evaluation should be based upon feedback from the participants, their parents, community people and staff. The long-term evaluation invites a need for more objectivity.

Whoever does the long-term evaluation, *both* the stakeholders — the board, staff, contracted workers and volunteers, participants, parents and key community leaders — *and* some independent voices with no direct stake in the outcome of the evaluation should be included in the study process itself, either in providing guidance or in actually conducting and approving the final evaluation report.

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VISION SEEKERS

PART 2

Social Group Work Exercises



**A Structured Personal & Social Development Program
for First Nations' Youth at High Social Risk**

Richard Thatcher, Ph.D.

VISION SEEKERS

Part 2

FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

— by Richard W. Thatcher, Ph.D., RSW, CCS

March, 2001

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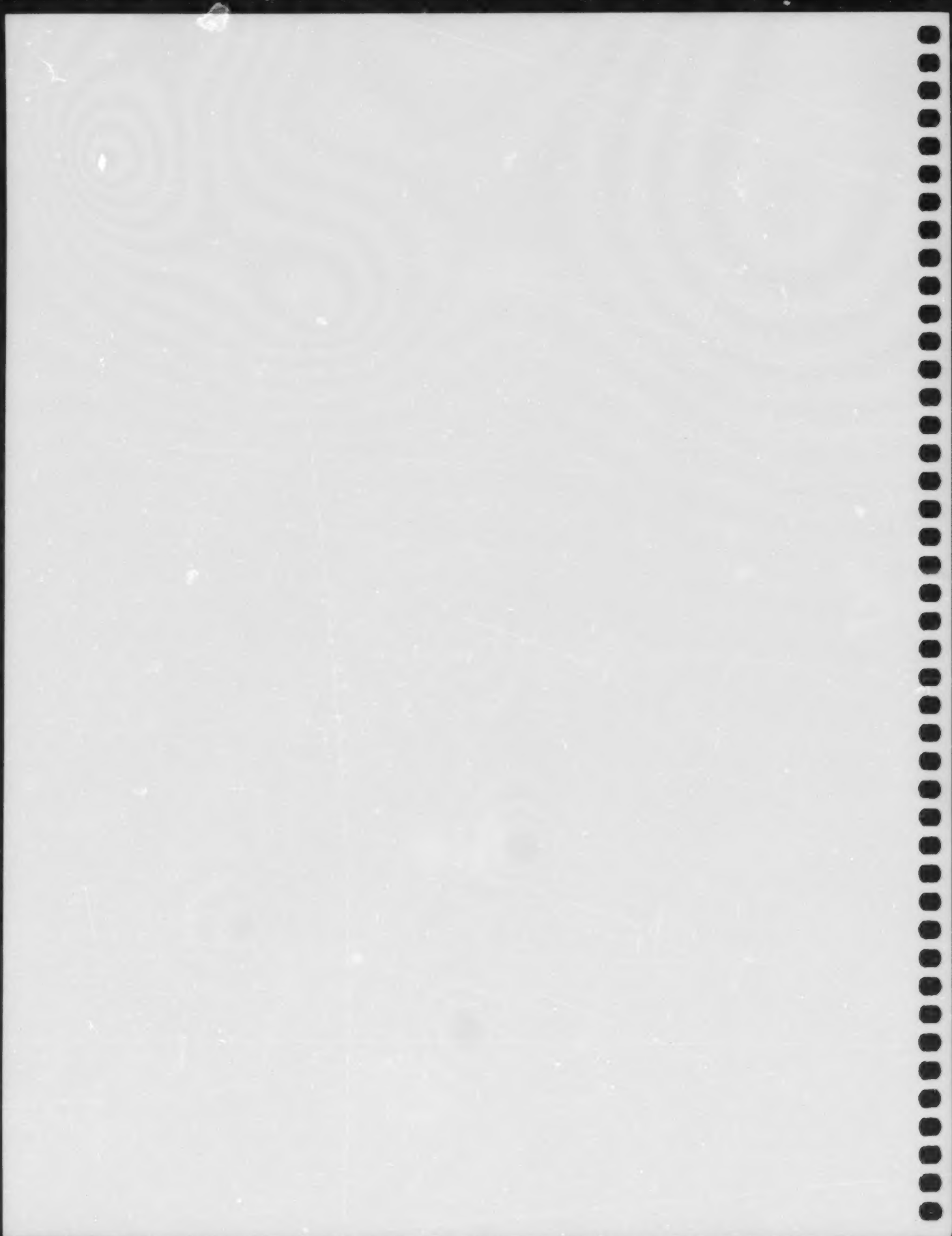


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INTRODUCTION

This book of social group work exercises has been prepared to support the after-school component of the *Vision Seekers* secondary intervention program. Vision Seekers is targeted on 12-14 year old adolescents of indigenous North American ancestry (i.e. variously referred to as First Nations' people or as "first peoples," "Native Americans," or, more commonly, as "Indians," the latter stubbornly continuing in common use by indigenous people themselves, despite its current status as a politically inappropriate term among academics and political leaders).

Vision Seekers is intended as an after-school and summer camp learning program extending, on a part-time basis, over two years of the lives of young people experiencing puberty and the initial stages of adolescence. The participant selection process is intended to ensure that all participants recruited to the program enter no sooner than three months prior to turning twelve and complete the program, at the very latest, at the mid-point of their fifteenth year.

For a program like this to make a difference, it is essential to recruit participants before their mental, social and emotional loyalties are wholly captured by any local teen contra-culture that may exist.

Vision Seekers is intended primarily for reserve settings but it can also be offered, with modifications, in urban settings, *if* there is adequate support from appropriate social service agencies, a public (or separate) education system or a municipal recreation system (e.g., a "Parks and Recreation" department). The exercises in this second volume are linked thematically and sequentially to the after-school element of the program, as described in the core Vision Seekers' text, which is available under separate cover (Volume 1). The after-school element is the core of the Vision Seekers experience and the "heart centre" of the overall program; in other words, all other elements originate, are supported by and are directly linked to the work and recreation that occurs in the after-school experience.

The Vision Seekers program was developed as a means of intervening in the troubled personal and social lives of contemporary youth with ancestry in the indigenous First Nations of Canada. The purpose of the program is to deter young adolescents from acquiring values, attitudes and behaviour patterns which will, predictably, reduce substantially the quality of their future lives—and which will, almost inevitably, affect the lives of others in negative ways, incurring substantial social and financial costs to their communities and to society as a whole.

The program extends, on a part-time basis, over two years of the participants' lives. It includes personal goal-setting, an after-school program involving purposeful, social group

work and constructive recreation and support from the community, parents or other primary care givers, a counsellor, and school mentors.

In addition to an intense program of learning social problem-solving and cognitive-behavioural skills, participants who stick with the program are coached and encouraged through individual and group activities aimed at promoting personal interest (hobby or career) skills, academic skills, and community-serving (altruistic) attitudes and behaviours.

The Vision Seekers program also includes one or, if possible, two summer camp experiences. The camp combines a variety of recreational and cultural experiences. It also involves the participating youth in practical skill development, shared camp management, leadership development and the practice of democratic decision-making.

The final stage of program participation, ideally coinciding with the last period of the second year camp, involves a *Vision Quest* experience or an alternative experiential challenge that will mark the completion of the adolescent's journey from childhood to adolescence. Through fasting and working through a traditional or (modified) contemporary experience involving solitude and significant challenges, the youth participates in a rite of passage into a period of responsible adolescence and preparation for the challenges of adulthood.

While many of the exercises in this manual have been prepared as original material specifically for the Vision Seekers' program, many have also been derived from the work of others. Where the borrowing was largely or extensively derivative, every effort has been made to duly and gratefully acknowledge the source. It should also be noted that some of the group work exercises have been around for decades and their origins are now largely unknown: They have originated in the creative toils of various social workers or in the "sensitivity training" or "T-group" sessions born of the human relations school of applied social-psychology of the 1960s and early 1970s. Several of these exercises have been altered in use and written description so many times that they resemble little of their original drafts; in effect, like many folk songs, they are best referred to as "traditional" and authorship can only be claimed jointly by the forgotten originator *and* by the string of people who have altered the exercises to fit their needs. In fact, the basic concepts behind many of the "original" exercises may well have first been learned by the writer at someone else's feet or from pages written by others in sources dimmed by the fading of memory. No matter how original we would all like to view our own work, few of us, in any field, can with full honesty disclaim that even our finest efforts are, at best, primarily a synthesis of many things that we have learned from others.

While the exercises presented in the manual are specifically selected to key into the Vision Seekers program, they can also be used as supports for a variety of secondary prevention programs targetted on adolescents (of aboriginal ancestry or otherwise). Each of the exercises may — and *should* be — modified, if necessary, to suit the style of whoever is facilitating them, and to meet the needs of the children/youth in a program.

Hopefully, whoever reads all or part of the material in this manual will find some exercises of value in their work with troubled adolescents. Ultimately, it will be the commitment, creativity, sensitivity and skill of *you*, the Program Directors, Recreational Coordinators, and Counsellors staffing local Vision Seekers' programs (and other group workers) who will make the *real* difference in the lives of these young people with such difficult beginnings.

STAGE 1

ORIENTATION

These first exercises are all geared to establishing a sense of familiarity and a basic sense of trust between the group members and between the group members and program staff.

Exercises include a traditional method of initial greeting, which can also be used in the summer camp, as well as some ice breakers.



EXERCISE 1.1

CIRCLE GREETINGS*

To initially establish a sense of togetherness and belonging, an excellent, traditional way to begin the Vision Seekers experience is to employ an exercise called *Circle Greetings**, which pretty well describes the idea itself. In this exercise, a large circle is formed with everyone facing inwards, holding hands. An Elder or the group leader welcomes everyone to the program, making sure to describe the program as a "community-in-the-making" and as a family. The group leader introduces him or herself by shaking hands with the person to the left. The first person whose hand is shaken by the group leader follows the leader, shaking the person to his or her left. Everyone continues on around the circle until all participants have met each other.

After everyone has shaken each other's hand, hands are held again forming an unbroken circle. The Program Director (or facilitator or group worker [typically, these are all one and the same]) should then say to the group: "Okay, by the end of the first year of the program, we're going to be a very closely knit group. Right now, we're only this close, that is, we feel only this close (placing the palms of his/her hands about two feet apart) but before we leave here, my guess is that we'll be this close (pressing palms together). If we all cooperate and show that we can each meet the challenges before us — and also have a lot of fun — then I *know* we'll be this close (pressing palms together again)."

Some other ice-breaker exercises should then be employed. Several are included in the following pages. The exercises can be used in the first few meetings or when there is a turnover of participants (Hopefully this will primarily occur during new intakes)

* This exercise is derived from (1) a memory of the author's experience at a conference called "Youthquake," held at Camp Easter Seal at Watrous, Saskatchewan, in the early 1960s and (2) from Thom Henley's *Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways, New Directions (Outdoor Activities Based in Native Traditions)*. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta, 1966 (Revised Edition (First Published in 1989)), pp. 51-52.



EXERCISE 1.2

ICEBREAKER "A"

OBJECTIVES

1. To facilitate a getting-acquainted process
2. To help alleviate the anxieties of participants during the first session or when there is a new intake or the addition of new participants.
3. To encourage participation.

GROUP SIZE

Size is unlimited. The important thing is to form dyads (pairs).

TIME REQUIRED

30-50 minutes

MATERIALS

None

Name tags (Name tags are not popular with teens, but ask them to go along with you for the first two meetings until staff get to know participants and participants get to know staff).

PHYSICAL SETTING

The room simply has to be large enough to accommodate the pairs on hand.

PROCESS SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATOR

- ▶ The Program Director (facilitator) should ask each member to introduce him/herself to the group and to then tell the group about the "goofiest thing" that happened to them in the past week.
- ▶ Next, ask the group members to form pairs. Ask each partner to the dyad to share two embarrassing things that happened to him/her in the past year, one of which didn't seem funny at the time but does now. Tell them that they should also be willing to share the

recollection with the larger group. Tell them they will have 5 minutes to talk about the experience, then the group-as-a-whole will get together and the stories shared.

- ▶ After 5 minutes, reconvene the larger group and have the partners share each other's experience.
- ▶ After each participant has completed sharing their partner's goofiest experience, ask the group members to share "how easy or difficult it was" to (a) talk in pairs with a partner assigned to them rather than someone they have chosen themselves (b) have one partner tell the other's story.

EXERCISE 1.3

ICE BREAKER "B"

OBJECTIVES

As in Ice Breaker "A"

GROUP SIZE

The large group size can be very large, with even 40 or 50 not representing a major challenge. Extra time is required if the large group is large, however. The important thing is to form dyads (pairs).

TIME REQUIRED

30-50 minutes

MATERIALS

None

PHYSICAL SETTING

The room simply has to be large enough to accommodate the pairs on hand.

PROCESS

- The Program Director (or other group worker/facilitator) should ask each member to introduce herself to the group and to then tell the group about a favourite person or experience from the past. The process should be started by one or two examples presented by the group worker/ facilitator (*Note:* How this is introduced should be carefully considered. If the kids are into being "supercool," then s/he should customize the way that the example is presented, adapting it to current slang and teen-culture preoccupations. Telling a personal recollection or experience that they will find "cool," and enticing the same thing out of them is particularly effective). Then ask someone to start and move around the circle clockwise or counterclockwise until everyone has introduced themselves and provided an example. If some are too shy, encourage them but don't stall (Come back to them after others have finished).

- ▶ After each member has finished, dyads (i.e., pairs) should be formed. To facilitate the selection of pairs, the facilitator should instruct the participants to choose a partner whose favourite person or experience they could best identify with. There will be "loose ends" (e.g., some who can't choose; overlapping interests) so the facilitator will have to be assertive in completing the pairing process to avoid conflicts (and if there is an odd rather than even number, then s/he will have to be a partner in one of the pairs). Also participants should be told they will have 10 minutes to get to know each other better.
- ▶ After 10 minutes the group should reconvene. The facilitator should ask each member to tell the group about their second "favourite person" or "favourite experience" from the past. Then the pairing process should be repeated, with the facilitator insisting on members finding new partners. Give each 10 minutes to get to know each other.

EXERCISE 1.4

ICEBREAKER "C"

OBJECTIVES

1. To further facilitate the getting acquainted process.
2. To encourage participation.
3. To further advance the self-disclosure process.

GROUP SIZE

Groups should not be larger than 12. Depending on the group and how conversant they are, it might make sense to split the group evenly into sizes of 6 members each (i.e., if they are "chatty" with each other).

TIME REQUIRED

15 to 30 minutes

MATERIALS

None

PHYSICAL SETTING

The room simply has to be large enough to accommodate the group formations.

PROCESS

- ▶ The group worker/facilitator should ask the participants to help break the ice by taking turns in responding to some questions.
- ▶ S/he has the group respond to any or all of the following:

What is the best thing about life on the reserve (or life in the local, urban setting)?

* This exercise is derived from an exercise entitled "Breaking the Ice" in Susan Carrell's excellent manual, *Group Exercises for Adolescents: A Manual for Therapists* (pp. 33-34), Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

What is the worst thing about reserve life?

What would you want to be if you couldn't be what you are?

If you could be an animal, what would it be?

If you could be a sports star, who would it be?

If you could be anyone else on the reserve, who would it be?

If you were to be an actor, who would you want to be like (of actors you know)?

What is the worst attribute of humankind and why?

How would you change your life if you could start over?

The facilitator should get each member to respond to at least three of these questions. After answering all of the questions by going around the circle, ask:

- *What did you learn about each other?*
- *Did any of the questions encourage you to want to know more about someone? Ask the now?*
- *Whose responses did you identify with most?*
- *Which question was easiest to answer? Why?*
- *Which was the most difficult to answer?*

EXERCISE 1.5

'SAFE CAMP, TRUSTWORTHY CAMPERS' A PROGRAM ORIENTATION FOR THE WHOLE GROUP

OVERVIEW

The idea behind this session is for participants and staff to get to know one another and to establish a "safe camp" (the staff might want to refer to the program space used for the regular after-school sessions as "the camp") in which to work and play together. The exercise also works well as an opening exercise for the summer camp experience. Further, describing the after-school setting as a camp also sets an appropriate tone for the summer camp. The participants will work together in this session to establish a group agreement. Each will agree to adhere to the terms throughout the program.

TIME FRAME

This exercise should be the primary activity in the second session and should be of 1.5 to 2 hours in duration.

MATERIALS

None

PROCESS

Outline the purpose of the program

The following points should be made

1. When we are growing up, few people talk to us about how we should think about and treat ourselves and how we should treat our friends and acquaintances, people who are weaker than us and people who are stronger. Few people tell us in any detail how we should respect and treat our Elders, how we should develop as men and women; nor do they talk to us about what we want to accomplish through education and work in our lives, about what makes a friendship work and a love relationship work, or what are the ingredients of a good marriage. Sometimes our parents are uncomfortable talking about these things or they are distracted by their own concerns or troubles so they don't get

around to talking to us or teaching us about this kind of thing. So instead, we often get our information from friends who are as young and inexperienced as us, from television, videos, advertising, and so on. Often these sources can misguide us rather than give us clear and accurate directions.

2. The purpose of the Vision Seekers' program is to help young people explore their own personal needs, learn about how they can feel better about themselves by having a respectful style of interacting with other people, treat friends in a kind and helpful manner, showing concern for the weak and respect for Elders. It is also hoped that it might improve your self-esteem, to get you to like yourselves more, if these are problems for you, and to dispel hurtful myths about male and female roles and love relationships, and to recognize and understand the abuse of power and control in relationships. The program will also help you discover what you think makes for a healthy relationship.
3. It is important that young people learn from one another in this program and talk about what is on their mind, like what is bugging them and what their goals and aspirations are. It is also important for them to talk about what they want and don't want in friendships and in family and love relationships.
4. It is particularly useful to describe past program experience. At this point, staff might spend another 10 or 15 minutes describing the program and its purpose and facilitating questions and answers. If there are former participants available (i.e., If you are at least in your 2nd cycle), invite them to come to a session and describe what they got out of the program. They should be asked to provide an overview of their experience in the program; they might be asked to talk about the following:
 - *What they learned*
 - *What impact the program had on them?*
 - *What they enjoyed most about the program?*
 - *How they were feeling at their first session?*
 - *What feelings developed as the sessions proceeded?*

Group members should be given an opportunity to ask questions of the past participants.

If the program is just getting started or if graduated members are not available, this time slot can be replaced by asking the youth to share their experience of group experiences of this kind that they have attended or a discussion of what they imagine the group will be like.

Or the Director might talk about similar programs.

5. This is an excellent time to establish a group agreement on participation rules. The group should brainstorm the "rules" for the group agreement. These "rules" should be summarized on a flip chart and posted for the duration of the program (An artistic

member might be asked to print out the rules on a decorative poster).

The facilitator might tell participants that they will be asked to sign the group agreement in Session 3 as a sign of their continuing commitment to the group and to the group agreement.

It should be stated that although this is a learning group, intended to assist young people develop personally — like cubs, scouts or other youth groups — rather than a therapy group, some people may choose to talk about things that are personal and that they wish only the group to know. Group rules are a way of making it safe for people to talk about their experiences and to share their ideas, and a way of ensuring that everyone is treated with respect. *Vision Seekers* is about learning how to solve problems of living—effective, healthy ways to live with themselves and other people.

Because this is the teens' group, ask them what kinds of group rules they would like to have. Tell them that you will have to insist on some rules being in place but that, initially, you're going to leave it up to the participants. The following are examples of some of the rules youths may wish to implement:

- Confidentiality
- No put-downs
- Honesty
- No smoking inside
- Start and end on time
- Attend regularly
- One person speaks at a time

It is particularly important that many of the "rules" are generated by the youth and not by the co-facilitators. Emphasize to the teens that this is their own group and it is important for them to establish the group agreement.

Note: There is a strong possibility that participants will disclose a number of past and present experiences with violence and abuse as they come to have more trust in the group. At this time, staff should inform the youths that there are limits to confidentiality and that facilitators have a legal responsibility to report disclosures of current violence to child welfare officials. (This should be done, first, in a private conversation with the child disclosing the abuse, then with the group as a whole.) Careful and thorough explanation and discussion of the matter is essential, and support should be offered.

Some Activities for Establishing Rules and Procedures for Program Participation

The following exercises should help facilitate a successful outcome for the process of generating ground rules for group participation.

1. *Form a Decision-making Council.* Have the group meet as a whole in a tight circle, sitting on the floor. The Director (facilitator) should sit as a member of the circle and not in a position associated with traditional power such as in front of a blackboard, flipchart or behind a big desk. The Program Director or one of the participants might moderate, however (*Note: Each member should take a turn acting as moderator.*) The objective is to reach consensus on rules, priorities, and other matters that may arise. Co-facilitators should point out any rules that he thinks may be unworkable or that might set him up against the class as the enforcer.
2. *Divide into Small Groups.* The group as a whole should divide into smaller groups of four or five to discuss and make recommendations about rules, procedures, problems. It is important that the task be concrete enough to be clearly understood, and a definite time limit should be placed upon the discussions. All groups can work on the same task, or the tasks can be divided among the groups. After the small group meetings, the group should meet as a whole to discuss and act upon the recommendations of the small groups.
3. *Summarize the Conclusions.* The Program Director might summarize and corroborate the findings of the larger group and agree to get them typed up and returned for circulation next meeting. A discussion should follow, centred on the summarized rules.

EXERCISE 1.6

SHARING LIKES AND DISLIKES

OBJECTIVES

1. To develop interpersonal familiarity amongst group members.
2. To encourage trust in the group setting.
3. To promote the idea that the group is a safe place to bring problems and a significant mechanism for problem-solving.

TIME REQUIRED

30-50 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

Questionnaires (see below) and pencils.

EQUIPMENT

Desks or tables with enough space to allow privacy would be useful, but not essential.

INSTRUCTIONS

Each person should be asked to fill out the questionnaire. It should be made clear that the information provided is to be shared with the group and that the questionnaires will be read aloud by someone else in the group. It should also be stressed that participation is voluntary. The participants should then be given a pencil and a questionnaire and asked to fill them out.

The circle should then be reformed and the questionnaires should be handed to the person to the left. If there is an odd number, a staff person should participate.

Participants should be asked to read the questionnaires and then, in a respectful way, tell the group about the person who had filled out the questionnaire. The person who filled it out can participate by clarifying points or adding to them. All those who filled out a questionnaire² should participate.

* This exercise is derived from "Session 1. Ice-breaker Exercise," in David A. Wolfe *et al*, *The Youth Relationships Manual* (p. 41). Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1996

INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Other names sometimes used (nickname, first name, second name, etc.) _____

Where I live on the reserve (or city or town) _____

Date of birth _____

Favourite and least favourite recreational activity, hobby, talent, skills, etc. _____

Favorite and least favourite CD (or cassette) _____

Favorite and least favourite sport _____

Favourite professional athlete _____

Place I'd most like to take a trip to (to visit) _____

Favorite type of music _____

Favorite singer _____ Favorite singing group _____

Favorite and least favourite movie & TV show: _____

Movie: _____

TV Show: _____

Best book I've ever read: _____ Worst book: _____

My talents are (what I'm best at) _____

But I'm no good at _____

If I could be anything I wanted when I grow up, I'd be _____

My interest in traditional First Nations culture (high, medium, low) _____

The things I'd most like to get out of Vision Seekers are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STAGE 2

TRUST BUILDING

These exercises emphasize the establishment and firming up of the participants' trust in each other and the staff, as well as solidifying their commitment to the program.



PREFACE TO STAGE 2 EXERCISES

OVERVIEW

These exercises are primarily designed to deepen the participants' trust in each other and the program. Often, trust is a major issue with the youth who will be enrolled. Because success of individual participants and the success of each Vision Seeker program depends on a sense of mutual trust between peers and between participants and staff, some time should be spent on promoting trust—which is the object of this set of exercises.

OBJECTIVES

a. Behavioral

Participants will:

1. Experience feelings of trust and/or mistrust by allowing themselves to be blindfolded and led.
2. Discuss trust issues with the group.
3. Explore trust issues by answering questions.

B. Cognitive

Participants will

1. Increase their sense of belonging to the group by sharing reactions to a group activity.
2. Be introduced to the importance of trust in the group.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Regular after-school meeting room (variations are described in each exercise).

MATERIALS

Blindfolds for first materials required.

METHOD

Some of these exercises can be done in pairs separated off from the larger group, others with the group as a whole. The first one involves pairs. If the number of participants is uneven, assign the extra person to work with a couple as a threesome.



EXERCISE 2.1

FOLLOW THE LEADER*

If you (Director/facilitator) think it is advisable to break up a clique or promote the interaction of certain group members, then you might want to assign participants to groups yourself, if not, have the participants choose partners for this exercise.

The group should begin with a general discussion of trust, with the exercise following. Each partner should have the opportunity both to be blindfolded and led, to be "sighted" and do the leading.

Depending on the weather and the facilities you have available, the activity may be outdoors. a school ground or sports field or park would be appropriate, as would a Band Hall, school gym, etc.

The "sighted" partner leads the "blind" one around a specifically defined area. Facilitators must monitor this situation carefully and not allow any practical jokes because horsing around or fooling the blindfolded partner serves to undermine rather than enhance the development of trust and, of course, it can be dangerous. The sighted partner describes the physical environment to the blindfolded partner by having him or her feel objects, such as a chair, counter, bush, water fountain, car, etc., whatever exists in the environment.

On the signal of the facilitator, the roles reverse, and the blindfolded partner changes places with the sighted one.

Following the activity, the group returns to the group room for "processing," which involves analyzing their feelings, and discussing trust in general terms and in terms of any insights they gained from the experience.

PROCESSING SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Initiate the discussion with attempts to analyze what happened in the exercise—while it is still fresh. Some good questions to bring up for discussion are:

1. *What was that like for you?*¹
2. *What did you learn?* (Attempt to elicit responses that identify characteristics of trust. Examples: "Elaine talked to me the whole time she was leading me, so it wasn't so scary." "Sam let me walk right into a table! I'm not sure I'll trust him again!" "I felt safe because Sarah had both of her hands on my shoulders")

* Derived from the exercise entitled "Trust Walk" in Susan Carrell's *Group Exercises for Adolescents* (1996:44-46), Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1996.

3. *Which did you like better—leading or being led?* Ask everyone around the circle so that each member responds. This question opens the door to a discussion of dependence versus independence. Emphasize the importance of respecting and valuing the perspective of every member. Interesting knowledge about the children can come from this question. For example, a child who has been treated like a parent in the family might prefer being led (taken care of) for a change, while teens with control issues much prefer leading.
4. *What is trust?* (Definition: "The ability to rely on the fact that another person, thing or situation will be supportive, helpful and honest."). Ask for a show of hands in response to the question: *Do you generally trust your friends? Brothers and sisters? Parents?*

Supplementary question: Is it good or bad to be trusting?

Expected summative answer (i.e., answer after discussion): *Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad.*

Supplementary: *When is it foolish to be trusting?*

When you have very little information or familiarity with a thing or a situation.

When you are uncertain about the motives of the other person—such as strangers, or acquaintances who may not be operating with your best interest in mind. (Self-protection should be mentioned as a positive skill.)

When is it good to be trusting?

- ▶ when you have sufficient information to know how something works and its record of functioning.
- ▶ when you are very familiar with a situation

Focus should be on the here and now: It is good, even necessary, to trust people involved in the Vision Seekers Program

CONCLUSION

Summarize the activity by highlighting the fact that trust in human relationships is *earned* and that in order to protect ourselves, we must observe the reliability of those we would like to trust, not give immediate trust. We should also recognize that each of us must earn trust by being reliable, supportive and honest with our friends. Finally, it must be recognized that trust is a key to the development of a supportive Vision Seekers group and program—TRUST IN STAFF and TRUST IN THE GROUP, as well as TRUST BETWEEN VISION SEEKERS.

EXERCISE 2.2

BUILDING a MODEL OF TRUST

OBJECTIVES

The goals of this exercise are as follows:

1. To explore various elements and meanings of trust
2. To promote expressions of trust.

RECOMMENDED GROUP SIZE

Groups of 5 or 6 each.

Time Required: Approximately one hour.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Lego blocks or similar building toys.

Sheets of 8.5" x 11" paper

Felt tipped markers

PHYSICAL SETTING

A room large enough to provide each group with an area in which to work without being disturbed by other groups.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

1. The facilitator might begin with a short lecture on the concept of trust, focusing on the idea that, while individuals recognize the need for trust in relationships, it is often difficult to assume trust in others or to present oneself as a trustworthy person.
2. Small groups of five or six each are formed. This experience is most effective if the participants in the groups know each other so that, in an urban setting, it will be less effective than on a rural reserve.
3. The facilitator then tells the groups that they are expected to concentrate on the idea of trust and to build a model which symbolically represents these concepts as they have

perceived them.

4. The groups are also asked to prepare a statement about their model, using the felt-tipped marker and a sheet of paper. The statement should be expressive and creative so that others can readily understand what they meant in reflecting aspects of trust in their model (concepts like strength, support, consistency, reliability, durability, and phrases like "solid, like a rock," a "feel-good texture," etc. may be expressed. Some groups may express some concept of distance from themselves, indicating that they don't experience a lot of trust or a sense of forward direction, indicating that they are still and perhaps always searching for a bit of trust.
5. When all groups are finished, they are each asked to display their models and to read their statement and the person reading the statement can ask others in the group to help out with the explanation by clarifying, elaborating, etc.
6. The facilitator should then lead a discussion around the question: "What did you find appealing or interesting about the presentation or model presented by the other group(s) in terms of what it says about trust?"

EXERCISE 2.3

LEARNING TO SHARE FEELINGS

GOALS:

1. To speed up the getting-acquainted process.
2. To study the experience of self-disclosure
3. To develop group members capacity to express opinions and feelings in a genuine way with others.

GROUP SIZE

Unlimited

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately one and one-half hours

MATERIALS

Copies of the *Intimacy Exercise Rules*

Note: The facilitator(s) should stand at a sufficient distance from the groups that they cannot hear what is being said but encourage them to get on track when they are obviously drifting away from the exercise or trivializing the experience.

SHARING EXERCISE RULES (TO BE COPIED AND SHARED WITH PARTICIPANTS)

Instructions to Participants

"During the hour and a half allotted for this experience I'd like you to ask some of the questions on the list presented below. The questions reflect various degrees of intimacy. You should begin with questions that are less intimate and more easy to answer before plunging in with the "heavy" questions.

"Take turns asking the questions and follow these rules:

- You must be willing to answer any question that you would ask your partner.

- You can refuse to answer any question initiated by your partner but you should be aware that some attempt to answer is an expression of trust.
- Both must agree that your communications will be held in the strictest confidence. By *not* revealing disclosures, partners are earning their trustworthiness."

List of Intimate questions

If you were to go on a trip somewhere, what person would you most like to have along?

What personality traits do you like the least?

Are you proud of your cultural heritage?

Do you ever wish you were a non-aboriginal person?

Is there anything about non-Indian people that you particularly admire? Dislike?

Do you feel that your parents provide you with your basic needs in terms of food, clothing, and private bedroom space?

How important is religion in your life? Spirituality?

Do you get an allowance? How much and how often? Are you satisfied with these arrangements?

Of all the things you've done in the past year what do you feel most ashamed of? (Don't answer if you don't want to, but tell your partner why)

What do you feel most ashamed of in your past (Up to a year ago)?

Of all the things that other people sometimes do to you or when they are around you, what turns you off the most?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

How do you feel about crying in the presence of others?

Do you think that females are equal, inferior or superior to males?

How important is money to you?

Have you ever been approached to become a member of a gang? What do you think of gangs?

Do you think the Vision Seekers program will be successful?

What do you like most about the Vision Seekers program so far?

Have you ever sniffed gas?

Have you smoked marijuana or done any other drugs?

Have you ever been drunk?

What do you like least about the Vision Seekers program so far?

What foods do you like least?

What are your favourite foods?

What emotions do you find most difficult to control (e.g., temper, sadness, worry)?

What do you like most about yourself?

What do you do for other people that you are most proud of?

Have you ever been arrested for breaking the law?

If there's one thing to change about your parents, what would that be? Your mother? Your father?

Do you enjoy leading people (i.e., being a leader)?

What do your parents like most about you?

What do your parents like least about you?

If you could change one thing about your brothers or sisters (if you have them), what would it be?

If your parents could change just one thing about you, what would they choose to change?

Have you ever been tempted to seriously harm yourself? Why?

Have you ever wanted to injure someone else? Why?

Do you like your name?

If you could be anyone besides yourself, who would that be?

Who are your favourite sport stars?

Who do you most admire in this community? Why?

What is the worst thing you have done to a brother or sister?

Are your parents divorced or separated? If they are, how do you feel about their being apart?

Completing the Exercise

The group worker/facilitator should reconvene the group as a whole, then facilitate a discussion aimed at showing the group that, while there are many individual differences between members, there are many things that they have in common. The conclusions should emerge out of the discussion and the facilitator should only have to summarize.

Useful questions might include:

1. *When you first shared information, how many of you felt a little reluctant, holding off for a while? Why did that happen?*
2. *When you think about your own answers and the answers of your partner, what was the most surprising thing you found out about your partner?*
3. *What were the similarities that you would have expected?*
4. *Was there anything about the attitude of your partner that you think should maybe change?*
5. *Was there anything your partner said that you were particularly impressed with?*

FOCUS IN ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS AND LOOK FOR PATTERNS

The exercise should be completed with a summary of the differences (typically they are over details) and the similarities between the participants (typically the similarities are more striking, at least in terms of significant aspects of their experience, such as thoughts about their lives, their fears and anxieties, their preferences in popular culture, etc.).



STAGE 3

SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING

Vision Seekers is primarily a skills-building program. Stage 3 exercises are aimed at teaching the participants how to use and actively participate in facilitating a group problem-solving process. The learning at this stage explicitly creates one of the primary tools for program implementation and its goals of guided personal problem-solving and the teaching of personal problem-solving skills, it also demonstrates democratic principles and implicitly teaches leadership skills.



EXERCISE 3.1

THE BRAINSTORM FOR GROUP LEARNING & PROBLEM-SOLVING

INTRODUCTION

The process of organizing group activities around brainstorming is so important to the process of group-centred social learning programs such as Vision Seekers that it has been outlined in detail—and Program Directors are encouraged to train the participants in the technique. Brainstorming becomes a sort of foundation rationale for the purpose of the group; it is an effective, enjoyable and powerful mechanism for exploring ideas, decision-making and learning. Conscientious, disciplined use of brainstorming produces a versatile, creative, mind-expanding way of thinking. The rules should be reviewed often to ensure that they are understood and accepted, and it is probably a good idea to discuss the rationale for each with the group.

RULES OF BRAINSTORMING

- 1 Express no negative evaluation of any idea presented.
- 2 Work for quantity, not quality—the longer the list of ideas, the better.
- 3 Expand on each other's ideas, piggyback, elaborate wherever possible.
- 4 Encourage zany, far-out ideas.
- 5 Also encourage thoughtful, serious, well-conceived ideas.
- 6 Record each idea, at least with a key word or phrase.
- 7 Set a time limit and hold strictly to it.

RATIONALE

Brainstorming helps to generate a large volume of ideas, it encourages germs of ideas, half-formed ideas, it also gives those ideas which, while having some shortcomings, also have some a chance to grow and develop. Most important, it turns group problem-solving away from a competitive, one-upping atmosphere towards a truly collaborative venture where the main adversary is the problem to be solved rather than others in the group. The facilitator or group worker should outline this message in his or her own words.

In a larger sense the rules of brainstorming form the structure for the personal growth group, experienced as a place where all are accepted for what they are, where all may try without fear of failure, where active collaboration is encouraged, and where creativity, individuality, and even unorthodoxy is respected.

Brainstorming is also an easy and effective method of community building.

THE BASIC RULES

Here are the basic rules of brainstorming (Outline them on a blackboard or flipchart and discuss them):

1. *Express no negative judgements*: This rule encourages participants to speak freely without pre-judging whether their ideas are good enough to be shared. It says, "All ideas are welcomed here." The aura of acceptance and respect for each individual grows where this rule holds sway as part of the group routine.
2. *Work for quantity*: This rule helps the flow of ideas by adding a game-like tension to the activity. Quality is a by-product of quantity: the longer the list, the more likely it is to include a number of useful or eventually workable ideas. This rule encourages everyone to try without facing the risk of failure.
3. *Encourage outlandish, far-out (not silly, but not totally impossible) ideas*: This rule encourages creativity, individuality, the unusual, the unexpected. Many zany, far-out ideas have a useful kernel which may not be evident to the one proposing the idea but which is picked up later by the group. And a seemingly outlandish idea may trigger another idea in someone else's mind. Problems are often seen in new ways as a result of this practice.
4. *Elaborate (further develop) on each other's ideas*: This rule encourages participants to help each other. It shows that it is important to listen to others because they might spark something in our own mind. When one person elaborates on another's idea, he is paying a compliment to that person. Why? Because he is showing acceptance of the person with the idea, appreciating his contribution and approving of him as a worthy collaborator. This rule can help change the group from the scene of a game with winners and losers to a place where all can win.
5. *Record all ideas expressed*: This rule reinforces the acceptance of each idea and provides for a mechanism where no idea needs to be evaluated on the spot to see whether it is good enough to record. These brainstorm lists can be thought of as rich deposits which can be later worked on and shaped to meet specific needs.
6. *Set a time limit*: This rule takes away the pressure for perfection. Time is seen as a valuable resource to be taken into account in any undertaking. Generally, where a time limit is regularly established and adhered to, personal commitment is high, because individuals are relieved of the tension of determining when they have worked long enough to satisfy the requirements of the task.

PRACTICE BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a skill which can be improved through practice. The rules should be reviewed before each brainstorming session and posted on the blackboard or wall. Brainstorming can be done by the entire class or in small groups. (Groups of five or six are small enough so that no one need wait to offer his idea, yet large enough so that the variety of ideas is stimulating.)

When the entire membership of the Vision Seekers program brainstorms as a group, it may be necessary to have two or three recorders at the blackboards so that they can keep up with the fast-flowing ideas. (Brainstorming is no time for raised hands or other such formalities.)

When small groups brainstorm, it is important to cross-fertilize by having the recorder for each group read the group's list to the entire group, or, where time is a problem, small groups can pair and read their lists to each other. Another way of sharing group lists is to have each person in the group pick the idea he likes the most from the group's list, and then have the selected list read to the entire class.

WARM-UP BRAINSTORMS

Warm-up Brainstorms: Warm-up brainstorming should be on playful subjects to encourage and show acceptance of zany, far-out ideas. Warm-up brainstorming is designed to free the mind from practical considerations and to encourage flights of fancy. Here are some possible topics for warm-up brainstorming—

1. You have been stranded on a tropical desert island. Food and water are no problem as the island can provide these in plenty. You have only one artifact of your former culture—an clay pot. Brainstorm uses for the pot. (Time limit: 5 minutes)
2. Brainstorm ways to improve on the common bathtub. (Time limit: 5 minutes)
3. Brainstorm uses for a plastic milk bottle containers (junk automobiles, broken baseball bats, tabs from flip-top cans, old wheel covers). (Time limit: 5 minutes)
4. Brainstorm ways to send loving feelings to someone far away. (Time limit: 7 minutes)
5. Brainstorm new household appliances. (Time limit: 7 minutes)
6. Brainstorm ideas for new, useful machines (Time limit: 7 minutes)
7. Brainstorm zany topics for warm-up brainstorming. (Time limit: 5 minutes)

'SPECTRUM ANALYSIS' and 'ALTERNATIVE SEARCH'

Spectrum Analysis Select a few items on a brainstorm list, look first for the good, useful, or workable parts. The idea as a whole may be unworkable, but there may be a useful kernel which can be used to provide a new and creative solution. We are so conditioned to look for the flaws in an idea that the useful part is often overlooked and the wheat is thrown out with the chaff.

Alternative Search brainstorming is a good method for finding alternative solutions for problems. 'Alternative search' is an especially useful device to enlist the facilitator and the group as a whole in helping an individual solve a personal problem.

An individual can bring a problem for alternative searching to a small group, such as, "How can I get along better with my brother?" Then he spends one or two minutes filling in the group on the background of the problem. The group then brainstorms solutions to his problem for a specific amount of time (usually no longer than ten minutes). The individual acts as recorder. He can then follow up with a spectrum analysis (see above) and a self-contract (see below).

GENERIC PROBLEMS

The group as a whole brainstorms problems that young people their age might have. Then one problem is selected for an alternative search by the whole group, or the class may divide into groups, with each group choosing a problem from the list.

Samples of alternative search questions include:

1. Ways to spend summer holidays.
2. Ways to make Elders feel more a part of the community.
3. Ways to increase your circle of friends.
4. What to do if your good friend offers you drugs.
5. Ways to save money.
6. Ways to avoid fights.
7. Ways to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

PARTICIPANT ROLES

The specific roles that drive the brainstorming process are the same one describe in the Exercise on group learning and problem-solving described above. Each participant should get to practice these roles. The experience of performing each role provides lessons to the person playing the role in leading, communicating, supporting others, and analysis.

Role Descriptions

Facilitator

The Facilitator is a neutral servant of the group. That means that s/he does not express any opinions other than making suggestions and explaining and enforcing rules that will help the group as a whole function efficiently, effectively and fairly. It is the facilitator's job to spell out the ground rules for the process by checking with members through consensus decision-making. S/he then acts as a coach and referee of the discussion, protecting those who might be under attack and encouraging participation by everyone. The facilitator also monitors the time and sets and maintains the match between scheduled time and the actual time taken by various activities. orally summarizes the conclusions of the discussion.

Recorder

If the group is large enough, there should also be a Recorder, who is also a neutral servant of the group charged with the task of carefully listening to help the facilitator summarize, with taking notes and summarizing the discussion — or more likely, summarizing the key conclusions and main points of the discussion — on a blackboard or flipchart pad according to the verbal summaries given by the Facilitator. The Recorder works as the second half of a two-person team. If the group is very small (say less than six), then the Facilitator might assume both the Facilitator and Recorder roles.

Participant (or 'Full' Participant')

The Full Participants are those who comprise the group as a whole, with the exception of the Facilitator and the Recorder. S/he is expected to freely participate but participate in a disciplined way, according to the rules of brainstorming, which means that,

- There is no attacking other group members or their ideas.
- Ridicule is banned and there is no personalizing when discussing an issue.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate and everyone should participate. Failure to do so consistently over time should be dealt with as a problem of group participation.



EXERCISE 3.2

A STANDARDIZED FORMAT FOR DAILY GROUPS

The daily group format should occur at the opening of each session. In the daily group, all participants report on their progress towards their goals. In addition, either an individual volunteers to have some help thinking through a problem s/he is having or a youth is asked about a problem or behavioural deviation that poses risks to himself, others or the Vision Seekers program. The format is derived from "Practical Guidelines" for group counseling, prepared by Matthew L. Ferrara (1993, pp. 36-63 [See the bibliography in Volume 1]). It is comprised of four distinct components: the *self-report*; the *assignment of the group's focus*; a *problem-solving* component; and the *conclusion*.

PARTICIPANT 'SELF-REPORTS'

In the *self-report*, both successes and failures *vis-a-vis* goal pursuit are reported on by all members sitting in the problem-solving circle. Specific problems only tangentially related to the goals but acting as obstacles to concentration on them should also be presented. The Director/group worker should not rely wholly on the facts as presented by the youth but the observations of the other participants and staff. Openness and candor should be stressed.

1. Each youth should take a turn and report on her/his progress between sessions. The report should be matter-of-fact, brief and straightforward, with time taken after the report for explanation and discussion, if the group worker or other participants wish to pursue something with the reporting youth. An attempt at a brief, factual explanation of successes and failures should be part of the self-report, however.
2. Group members listen to the report. If they feel that something factual has been ignored, they raise their hands and, with recognition by the Director, add their point of information to the discussion.
3. If the person doing the reporting fails to report a problem of tardiness or a major deviation from his behavioural goals, then the counsellor, if aware of the problem, pointedly asks the individual about the problem—and *why* s/he didn't report (emphasizing the importance of honesty in the program).
4. If a youth describes or explains a problem with a catchphrase like an "anger problem," this is not acceptable. More precision and a fuller description and/or explanation should be required.
5. Problems do occur in the self-report. As time goes on, the Director tends to have a pretty good idea of what the youth are doing in relation to their goals, so the self-report is usually a good mechanism for rating the honesty and productivity of the group as a whole. Such problems as the following are common:
 - A youth may report no problems, despite the knowledge to the contrary of the staff and other participants.
 - A youth projects the blame for a problem.

- A participant is vague in the way the report is given.
- Problems are minimized or exaggerated.
- Too much time is spent in self-report.

During a group session, the Director (or specialized group worker) may find it necessary to give the self-report for one or more youths in the group. This is sometimes necessary if a participant is very shy at first or is new to the group. Over time, however, none of them should be exempted, except in extreme circumstances.

ESTABLISHING THE GROUP'S FOCUS

Either based on the self-reports or on a request from a participant to use the group process to examine a problem, the Director/Group Worker should choose one or two topics to explore. Dealing with more than two issues tends to encourage a superficial treatment of issues. The seriousness of the problem or the urgency of an issue should determine which participant and which issues should be discussed (urgency regarding the health and safety of the child, a major turning point in his/her progress, or the morale or productivity of the group as a whole).

PROBLEM-SOLVING: A STEP-BY STEP PROCESS

The steps in the individually-focused, group problem-solving process are as follows:

Step 1: Problem Identification

This involves describing, who, what, when, where and how of a recent problem experienced by youth. Essentially, the group members must take the role of detectives, helping pin down the specifics of the problem. To prepare the group for participating actively, the first sessions should involve hypothetical situations or real problems of the staff. Gradually, introduce real problems of the participants. The group worker guides the discussion to ensure that all the facts are revealed. The attempt, at this point, is to focus on the problem in the present tense, *not* in reference to the past or future.

Step 2: Acceptance of the Problem

This step involves ensuring that the youth understands the problem clearly (or the positive behaviour that is being examined). S/he must take ownership of the problem accept his critical role in its manufacture. Typically there is an attempt to deny or minimize the problem—and it is the job of the group worker and the other participants to confront and encourage acceptance. As in all things human, the viewpoint of the participant under focus must be respected and there are limits to nonacceptance of the child's viewpoint. Respect the individual's viewpoint: This is role modeling and group tyranny is an ugly trainer.

Step 3: Explanation of Why the Behaviour is a Problem

Upon acceptance of the problem, the youth should be expected to explain the problem in a forthright manner, again with the encouragement and, at times, contrary inputs of the other

group members. Again, denial and minimization can be accepted, as can blaming others

Step 4: Generalizing one Problem to Similar Problems (i.e., Learning to See Patterns)

The youth must then be helped to think through how the problem connects to a pattern of problems and then to explore the underlying causes of the pattern. The group worker should actively contribute to the generalization process and other participants should be invited to make suggestions if they have some genuine insights. Consideration should be given to *distorted thinking* patterns and *social factors* influencing the child's choices. The major emphasis has to be placed on the fact that for most problems, there are preventions.

Step 5: Examining Alternatives

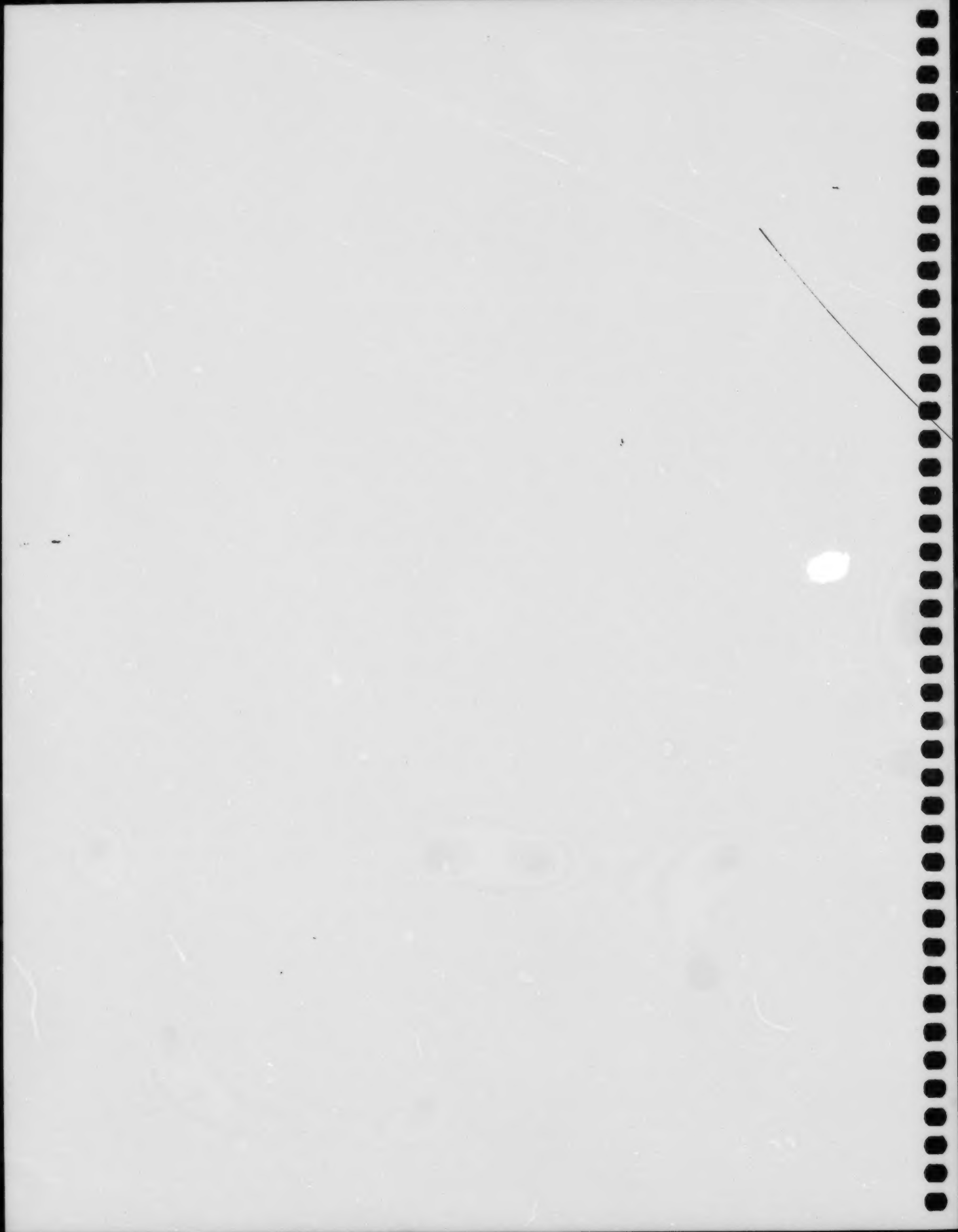
The youth experiencing the problem should be assisted in examining substituted behaviours that will assist in overcoming the problem. This could be a different thinking style, choice of friends, working on motivation, or relating differently to one's family or teachers. It could also be a set of practical sessions for solving a problem, such as who might a youth talk to or what kind of books might shed light on the issue or problem. Ultimately, the youth on the hot seat must come up with his/her own plan but the group worker and the other Vision Seekers can make constructive sessions.

Step 6: Follow-up.

The youth should make a commitment to accepting a certain strategy for overcoming a problem. S/he should also be expected to indicate how his/her progress in this regard will be monitored (e.g., a report at a subsequent meeting, etc.)

CONCLUSION

A good conclusion is important to the outcome of the suggested problem-solving strategies that have come out of the problem-solving group. It provides a powerful anticipatory reinforcement of what the youth is going to try to do. Have the youth and the group discuss the lessons to be learned from the problem and the problem-solving experience.



EXERCISE 3.3

GROUP HUDDLES TO PREVENT HASSLES

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Group huddles are brief, 10-15 minute group formations designed to interrupt a destructive activity. In extreme situations, the group huddle is used to avoid a physical confrontation. In most instances, the huddle-up is a means of preempting the disruption of the program. The following situations signal the need for such a "trouble-shooting" exercise:

SITUATIONS FOR WHICH HUDDLE INTERVENTIONS ARE APPROPRIATE

1. Persistent disruption of program activities.
2. Overt aggression or the threat of aggression.
3. Flagrant violation of the rights of others and no indication that the behaviour will stop unless confronted by an intervention.
4. Serious challenges to staff, which may lead to a physical confrontation.

Basically the idea behind the group is to avoid physical confrontation and even verbal confrontation by shifting the focus from an instigating individual to the group or from tensions between two youths to an exchange between a youth and the group worker. *Only* the staff should have the authority to call the group huddle—or the group could identify a participant with strong leadership qualities to act, along with the staff, as a *Peace Monitor*, allowing her/him the authority — and obligation — to play a proactive role as mediator in emerging tensions.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

The huddling intervention process consists of three problem solving steps:

1. Clear identification of the problem by one or more youth, including who was involved, what happened (a step-by-step account); when the event took place; and where it took place
2. Assigning responsibility: The group worker must identify who is responsible for the problem.
3. The group and the youth, assisted by the group worker, work on a pro-social, acceptable solutions to the problem.

CONCLUDING THE HUDDLE

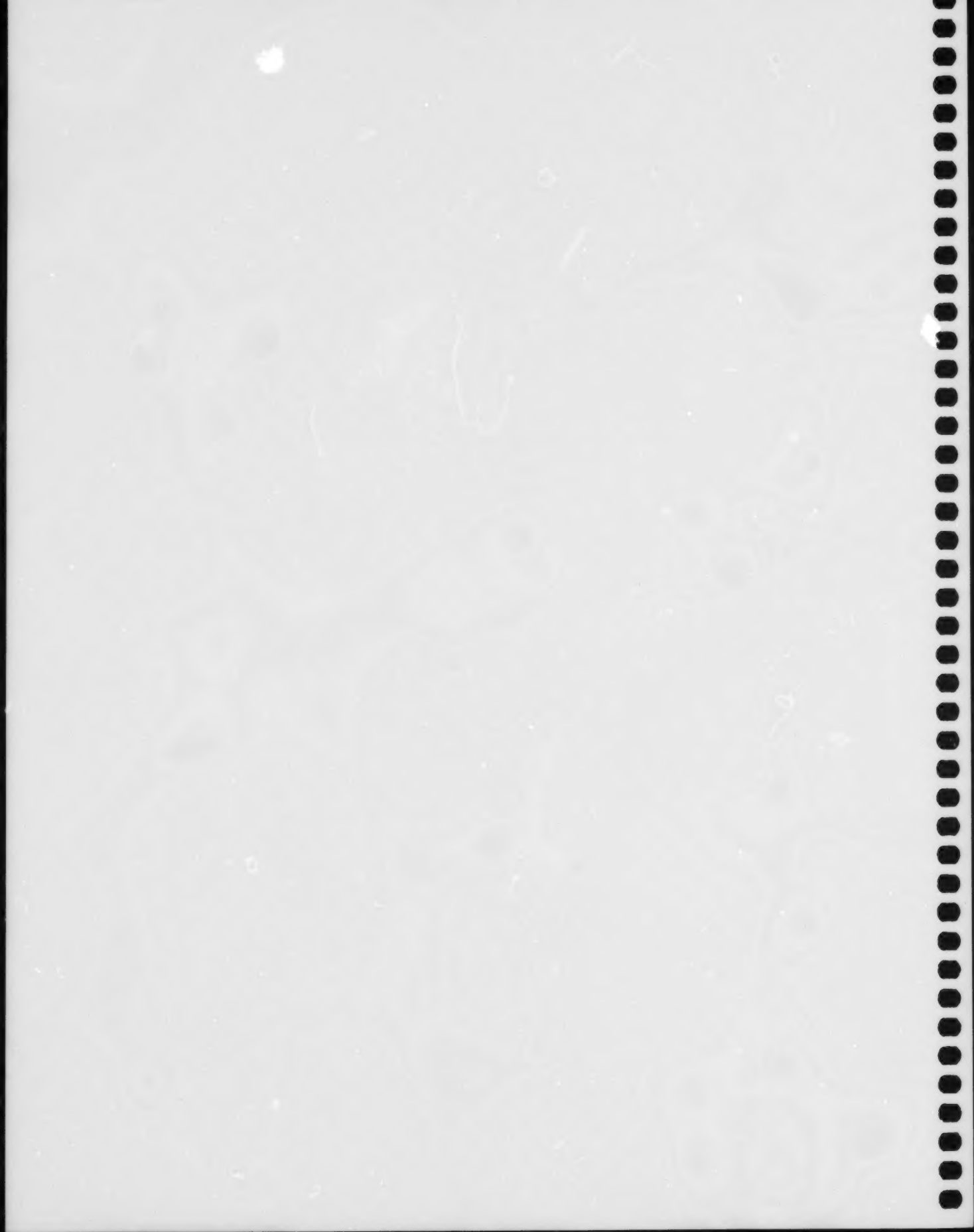
The group worker should have a clear-cut set of criteria for concluding the group. In establishing these criteria, consideration should be given to (a) ensuring that the entire situation and what was learned is summarized (b) ensuring that the offending parties must suffer specific consequences for their actions.



STAGE 4

GOAL SETTING

The essence of Vision Seekers is to provide an environment, an opportunity and sufficient trusted and intelligent guidance and support for troubled youth to set important life goals and to acquire both the self-confidence in themselves and the cognitive and social skills to realize these goals. Taken together, and elaborated upon, those goals comprise their vision of the future — the vision they are seeking. The structured exercises recommended for this stage of the program are intended to help participants with the goal-setting process and to firm up their commitment to their goals once they have been set.



EXERCISE 4.1

PREPARING a GOAL STATEMENT (IN READINESS FOR VISION SEEKER TREATIES)

OVERVIEW

This exercise is intended to utilize the skills of the Facilitator and the Vision Seekers after-school group(s) to assist each program participant with the setting of goals in the four areas identified in the book:

1. Personal Development
2. Academic Development
3. Recreational Skill Development
4. Community Service Development.

GROUP SIZE

Time is split between individual, private writing work and the group as a whole.

TIME REQUIRED

2-3 two hour sessions.

PHYSICAL SETTING

A room (or a set of rooms) large enough to accommodate individuals writing privately, discussing in pairs out of the earshot of other dyads, and space and chairs that normally accommodate your discussion circle.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

Each participant should be given the opportunity to work through this exercise, which involves the exploration of worthy personal development goals, the setting of goals, establishing action strategies and planning ways to reinforce the goal-seeking process. The process involves the following:

1. An interview with the Counselor that focuses on background difficulties, personality and social influencing factors (family, friends, etc.), academic strengths and weaknesses, and program goals.
2. A group interview focused on the establishment of goals with child, the Counselor, the Program Director and the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).

In addition, it is suggested that,

3. The group-as-a-whole should be used to assist each participant in his/her goal-setting, when it is appropriate!
4. Use the group to plan for the Vision Seeker treaty signing.
5. Use brainstorming and force field analysis to establish objectives and action strategies, and methods for reinforcing goal achievement motivation.

Sequence for Goal-setting

The following sequence of steps are recommended for establishing goals and objectives and identifying action strategies designed to realize the specific objectives.

1. Identify Problems in Key Areas of Basic Living:

Assist the youth to examine his/her own problems in the following areas:

- a. socio-cognitive functioning, i.e., how satisfactorily s/he responds psychologically and socially to the key people in his/her living environment (family, friends, acquaintances, enemies, teachers, etc.);
- b. academic achievement, i.e., problems with school work
- c. problems with the healthy use of recreation time
- d. altruism, i.e., assuming responsibility for others.

2. Develop New Scenarios

After each youth has satisfied the Program Director, the Counselor, parents and, most important, him/herself, regarding the nature of the problem in each of these areas, then they should essentially be asking themselves: *Realistically, how might things improve in each of these areas?* The Program Director should ask each of the participants to use their imaginations to conceive of a better future in each of these areas. For example, a youth who has been experimenting frequently with solvents or using drugs or alcohol could describe a "life without alcohol;" a youth who is shy and is always left out of the "fun" group of teens might describe a "life of being one of the gang."

Activity: Helping Others Develop New Scenarios

In this exercise, each participant is asked to help on of the other Vision Seekers to develop new scenarios. They should be instructed as follows:

1. This exercise requires you to have a partner.
2. One partner takes the role of the goal-setter, the other of the helper.
3. If you are the helper, ask the goal-setter to share a summary of the problem situation.
4. After having the goal-setter share his/her new scenario (or list of new scenarios), encourage clarification of the scenario.
5. After the exercise is finished, partners change or roles are reversed. This is repeated until

everyone feels comfortable presenting their goals in each area to the group as a whole (Note: This may go on for 2 to 3 sessions, but don't let each session take more than 40 minutes or the participants will get bored).

Evaluation and Specification

The new scenario is intended to reflect a change in current, problematic circumstances. Once the new scenario elements are clarified, they need to be evaluated and translated into very specific objectives and action strategies for achieving those objectives. To illustrate this goal reduction process, consider the following situation. This particular process involves reducing the goal into specific objectives, *not* action strategies,

Context: Jason Whitehawk is 12. He has been talking to a guidance counselor about how much difficulty he is having with mathematics in school. He is so frustrated that he isn't even trying anymore and the counselor doesn't seem to be helping. But he does want to do better in math, even though he thinks he isn't very smart and he is afraid he just can't do the work. The guidance counselor has assured him that he has the ability, based on his aptitude testing in school.

Show the participants four levels of concreteness in moving from the general to achievable specifics, e.g.,

Highly general goal (really just a statement of intent): "I've got to do something about my grades in math."

General objective: "I'd like to improve my mathematical skills."

More specific aim: "I want to be at least twice as skillful in both algebra and geometry."

Working Goal: "I'm going to study and practice hard enough that by the end of the school year I will have raised my grades in Algebra and Geometry by 20% each."

FACILITATORS SHOULD CREATE THEIR OWN SCENARIOS AS EXAMPLES AND GET THE GROUP TO PRACTICE.

The working goal should have the following characteristics in common (put on flipchart page or blackboard):

- It should be an *accomplishment*, an outcome, an achievement.
- It should be *clear and specific* as a statement of behaviour.
- It should be *measurable and verifiable* (Note: Explain both words).
- It should be *achievable*, which is to say, it should be realistic.
- It must be *adequate to the task at hand*, which is to say that it will contribute significantly to the handling of the problem situation or some part of it.
- It should be accomplished within a *reasonable time frame*.

Action Plans: Turning Goals into Reality

There is usually more than one way to achieve a goal. People usually choose a better strategy if they choose from among a number of possibilities.

Brainstorm Action Strategies

Have both the pairs and the group as a whole (when it reconvenes) brainstorm to help each of the participants overcome thinking that is too narrow. Remember the rules of brainstorming:

- Go around the circle making suggestions. Initially, don't criticize or even discuss suggestions; simply list them on flipchart paper or the chalkboard.
- Forget about the quality of suggestions initially: Quantity is the key. Evaluation comes later.
- Wild possibilities are encouraged rather than discouraged.
- Piggybacking and combining suggestions to make new ones are both allowed.

The facilitator can help stimulate imaginations to come up with creative ways of taking action. Ask them:

- What *people* are resources for you?
- What *things* might help you in your actions taken to achieve your goal?
- What *resources* both inside yourself and outside might help you accomplish your goals?
- Suggest they use a basic force-field analysis: Ask them: "What are the obstacles to these plausible actions strategies?" "How can these obstacles be overcome—if they can be overcome at all?"

EXERCISE 4.2

SELF-CONTRACTING

Brainstorming is not required for self-contracting, but self-contracting is frequently a useful follow-up to an alternative-setting brainstorm, so it is included here.

Once a person has selected a course of action which may lead towards the solution or reduction of a problem, s/he can write a contract with him/herself specifying what he is going to do, how long he will keep at it, and what observable indications of success s/he will use to evaluate it. Since research indicates that about three weeks are necessary for a new pattern of behavior to become fully functional, the final evaluation of the self-contract should come about three weeks after the initiation of the contract. a sample self-contract form is included following.

A self-contract is personal and private. Program staff and other members of the class should never ask to see it. If the student wants to show it to the teacher or others, that, of course, is permissible.



VISION SEEKER'S SELF-CONTRACT

Date _____

Contract period:

Contract to start on _____

End-of-first-week review on _____

End-of-second-week review on _____

Final review on _____

Statement of the problem:

Actions to be taken:

Observable behaviours or products to indicate success:

End-of-first-week review (comment):

End-of-second-week review (comment):

Final (end-of-third-week) review (comment):

Provisions for a new contract:

VISION SEEKER'S TREATY

After the self-contract has been prepared, the ceremony for the Vision Seekers Treaty signing should take place. a sample treaty is included below.

VISION SEEKER'S TREATY

This Treaty is struck between _____, a member of the Vision Seekers' program at _____ and _____, Program Director of Vision Seekers, _____, parents and/or guardians of _____, School Mentor assigned to _____ and _____, Program Counsellor, and _____ Chief of the _____ First Nation.

The Vision Seeker makes the following commitments:

1. S/he will participate actively in the program.
2. S/he will obey the conduct rules developed by participants in the program.
3. S/he will actively work towards the achievement of the following personal development goals:

I _____, the parent/guardian of _____ will
make the following commitments in support of the Vision Seeker:

I _____, a School Mentor, hereby make the following
commitments aimed at assisting the Vision Seeker to achieve his/her goals:

I _____, the Program Director, will make the following
commitments to help the Vision Seeker achieve his/her goals:

I, _____, the Counsellor working as an Associate of the
program, hereby make the following commitments in support of the work of the
Vision Seeker in attempting to achieve his/her goals:

I, _____, Chief of the _____ First Nation, hereby make the following commitments in support of the Vision Seeker in his/her attempts to realize the goals set out in this Treaty.

These commitments are made on this ____ day of _____, 199__, to indicate the mutual interest of Vision Seeker _____ and his/her direct caregivers in supporting his/her successful participation of in the Vision Seekers' program and, as such, are duly signed below and, upon the application of the seal applied by the Chief, the Agreement should be considered complete and binding on all parties.

Vision Seeker

Parent/Guardian

Program Director

School Mentor

Program Counselor

Chief of the _____ First Nation; and

I _____.
the Vision Seeker



STAGE 5

IDENTITY-BUILDING & VALUE CLARIFICATION

The exercises recommended for Stage 5 of the Vision Seekers program are intended to assist participants with clarification of their own values and sense of cultural identity. The underlying premise is that, while Aboriginal people are typically pushed and pulled in many directions by cultural influences, tradition vs. contemporary, reserve 'ways' vs. off-reserve influences, rural styles and attitudes vs. urban styles and attitudes, and "Indian" vs. "White," ultimately they must choose those values that are most "comfortable" in terms of their own sense of ethics, personal interests and preferences. With a solid foundation of self-selected values, they can limit the stresses associated with imposed cultural pressures.



EXERCISE 5.1

CULTURAL PRIDE

OVERVIEW

This exercise is an attempt to get participants to examine the reasons for being proud of their own cultural heritage. The key is not to encourage a sense of alienation from the larger Canadian and North American culture, for the participants have as much claim to being a part of the contemporary cultural mix as any other group. However, as we know, First Nations' people have been economically and socially marginalized. A history of assimilationist policies has repressed their heritage, generally leaving them with a romanticized and simplistic view of the past and confused sense of their identity in the current, often tragic, reality of impoverishment, unemployment and social problems that characterize so much of reserve and inner city life today. Instead, the key is to encourage a sense of pride in the legacy that the indigenous peoples of North America have left for the North Americans of today and, indeed, for the peoples of the world, but also to have a clear sense of what is worthy and what is undesirable in the larger society. Clearly, some aspects of the larger society are valuable; it is useful to welcome and embrace much of the wisdom and skills that can be adopted from Canada as a whole, with its multi-cultural heritage. The fundamental goal should be to freely choose satisfying, healthy and personally supportive aspects of the surrounding contemporary and traditional culture—and to be confident and proud of those choices.

GOALS

1. To engender knowledge and pride on the part of participants in indigenous North American cultures.
2. To promote self-esteem as a byproduct of cultural knowledge and pride.
3. To encourage cross-cultural appreciation and interpersonal empathy between the participants and people of other cultures.

TIME REQUIRED

3 sessions, 45 min. each

or

2 sessions, 60 min. each, if you have an invited resource person (with specialized knowledge)

MATERIALS

Printed handouts describing the contributions of First Nations cultures to the development of Canada and modern societies generally.

RESOURCE PERSONS

An Indian Studies or "Native" Studies teacher or scholar (*unless* someone on the immediate program staff has relevant knowledge).

PROCESS

The Facilitator should ask the participants how they feel about their own cultures, encouraging them to be as honest as possible. Also ask them if sometimes they have "mixed feelings."

It is likely that very strong feelings will be expressed, both negative and positive, and often defined in terms of "us" (Indian people) vs. "them" (non-Indians)—and often this ambivalence is expressed in the same person. The emphasis in this exercise is to get the participants to explore what is positive about their heritage, not what is *negative* about others!

The day before doing the exercise, hand out the article included below and ask the participants to read it for the next day's group. Some time should be made available to read the article during the after-school session.

1. Field a discussion centred on their feelings about their own cultures—and about the dominant culture.
2. Ask the participants to identify at least 2 things they like about contemporary, Canadian society and modern living. Discuss what they seem to have in common in terms of liking the larger society.
3. Ask them to identify what they are proud of in their own culture.
4. Present them with a lecturette based on the short article appended below, and then discuss how they feel about their culture.
5. Ask participants what they like about their own community and discuss its strengths.
6. Finally, ask participants to break into pairs and discuss what they might like to do personally in the future to make a contribution to Indian peoples and to their own community.
7. Regroup and discuss the answers given to the Question in Item 6.

Article by Richard Thatcher, Ph.D.

WHAT 'INDIAN GIVING' REALLY MEANS!

Many non-aboriginal people tend to assume that the culture imported to North America by the European colonists and settlers was superior in every way to the cultures they found upon their arrival. The 'newcomers' tend to think that Indians have contributed little, if anything, to the "modern world." Such beliefs may serve to assuage the guilt that affluent Non-Indian people might feel when confronted with the social and economic disparities between the Aboriginal population and the dominant, Anglo-Canadian and Franco-Canadian populations. In fact, the convenient belief that First Nations gave little to European settlers in North America and, in turn, contributed little to the world economy, is simply a falsehood. This article looks at some of the more obvious evidence that serves to challenge the common view.

It is true that, like European societies prior to the era of advanced agriculture, Indian societies were pre-historical (they did not have a written language), and the most advanced tools that many used were made of stone or bone; there was no iron smelting tradition; and the wheel, the plow and the keystone arch were not in use. Because of these facts, most non-Indians tend to dismiss the quality of Indian economies and the contributions they have made as peoples to human development generally.

We don't intend to glorify the past. When hard-nosed history is written, the "good old days" were often far more old than good. But the American Aboriginal contribution to the international economy was extremely significant—and that fact of history should be far more widely known!

The Aboriginal Economic Legacy

It is somewhat sobering to review some of the facts regarding the wealth of contributions made by Indian peoples to Canadian economic development and, indeed, to the betterment of humankind.

Consider the following:

- Indian peoples of the Northern Plains and forest lands had developed extremely effective

food-gathering, shelter-craft and methods to cope with extremely variant and, at times, severely harsh weather conditions. Without their advice, middle-European explorers could not — and often did not — survive.

- Early explorers would indeed *not* have probed into the heart of Canada without the Indian dogsled, birchbark canoe, the Indian snowshoe, Indian guides, and Indian medicines. Friendly Indians helped to open Canada peacefully for many European immigrants, teaching them how to survive on nature's bounty in a harsh climate but a potentially rich land.

- Indians practiced outdoor skills that were eventually learned by sportsmen around the world. While it is true that Indians killed animals, such as the buffalo, it was *not for sport* but for the things they needed to survive. Their animistic religion, which inspired them to believe that a higher power existed in spirit form in all living and non-living things, demanded that they have a deep respect for the environment and all of plants, animals, and inanimate materials that made it up. For this reason, hunting was undertaken with a deep respect for animals and the first peoples found practical uses for almost all parts of a slain animal.

- Indian women were virtually married to the

fur trade through their long-term liaisons with the British and French fur traders, and they were essential to its establishment and sustenance.

■ If we consider all Indians on the continent, it is apparent that almost every basic food item in Canadian kitchens today was first grown by Indians in the Americas.

* Potatoes were first grown by Indians in Peru, and were brought to Europe by the Spaniards in the late 16th century. By 1606, the potato arrived in Ireland, where it soon became the most important food crop, and it re-migrated to become a mainstay crop of many Europeans in America.

* Corn, with which we now make breads and various dishes, as well as corn syrup and corn flakes, was an Indian crop. It is now a staple food in not only North America but in various parts of Asia, Africa and Central and South America.

* Saskatchewan Indians grew wild rice, produced maple sugar, and discovered the use of a variety of teas, mushrooms and berries long before any Europeans knew of them

* Indians in America were the first to plant "Spanish" peanuts, "Boston" beans, lima beans, squash, melons, pumpkins, sunflowers, peas, tomatoes, chili peppers, and hundreds of other foods.

According to University of Saskatchewan Anthropologist Zenon Pohorecky, about half of all agricultural items produced in the world today were first grown by American Indians (1970).

■ In 1615-16, the Huron Indians provided Samuel de Champlain with medicine that cured him. The medical practices of Indians in the Americas in the 17th century were at least as good as those of the Europeans. In fact, some of our best-known drugs were of American Indian origin. Peruvian Indians used cinchona bark as a source of quinine for treating malaria. Curare is an Indian drug that has been used as an anaesthetic to temporarily stop breathing while a rubber pipe is inserted into a patient's windpipe.

Canadian Indians had an effective treatment

for diabetes, and Indians used iodine, coca (from cocaine), and novocaine.

As Pohorecky points out, "Saskatchewan Indians still derive perfumes from plants like sweetgrass, wolf willow, and sage to freshen and sweeten the air which we breathe. They still gather and use medicinal herbs whose derivatives can be found today in any modern hospital or pharmacy."

The recent science of "ethnobotany" is demonstrating that traditional healers in hunting and gathering societies have a complex, voluminous knowledge of natural disease preventions and cures.

Scientists have found that over 2,000 traditional "natural" herbs and medicines have empirically demonstrable healing properties.

The Great Lakes area was the site of the world's first mining and metal working tradition: the Old Copper Culture; and the metallurgical skills of the high cultures of southern Mexico and the Andes in some ways surpassed those of the Old World of the same era. The high cultures of southern Mexico and the Andes did extremely high quality work in engineering (such as the great roads and bridges of the Inca) ceramics, and weaving.

All agricultural peoples in North America had pottery, and its use spread somewhat beyond agriculture, particularly to the Plains.

One of the world's great basketry traditions was in the Desert Culture of western North America. They made wicker carrying baskets and other woven products for bedding, storage and eating.

Jack Weatherford, an American writer, has forcefully made the case that, at each step of the process of European and American industrialization, American Indian technology played an active and significant role. He points to the following:

• The gold and silver found in the Americas by the Spaniards through contact with the Aztecs served to finance the growth of European mercantile empires, thus laying the basis for an

international money economy and creating the trade conditions required to give birth to and sustain the industrial revolution

- Indian long-strand cottons, which were of higher quality than European cottons, as well as dyes, became staples of European textile production

- The Indian product "rubber," used for untold millennia by Indians for a variety of purposes, was actually "vulcanized" in a fairly basic way by Indians. Rubber was of course a primary material in the later stages of the Industrial Revolution and became a critical element in the manufacturing of the modern automobile.

Egalitarian democracy as we know it today in North America was not fully rooted in Europe; in fact, it owes an important part of its origins to some of the more advanced democratic systems "discovered" in the Americas.

When Americans, Francophones, Britains, Australians and Canadians try to trace their democratic heritage back through the writings of French and English political thinkers of the Enlightenment, they often forget that these people's thoughts were heavily shaped by the democratic traditions of the American Indians. The modern notions of constitutional democracy, individual rights, egalitarianism and federalism, arose from a unique blend of European and Indian political ideas and institutions along the Atlantic coast between 1607 and 1776.

As we know it today, modern democracy is as much the legacy of the American Indians, particularly of the Iroquois and the Algonquins, as it is the British settlers, of French political theory, or of all the failed

efforts of the classical Romans and Greeks. In his writings, Thomas Jefferson was particularly inspired by the Iroquois League--a confederacy that united its principal Indian nations: the Mohawk, the Onondaga, the Seneca, the Oneida, and the Cayuga. Each of these nations governed its own territory, and its own council met to decide the issues of public policy for each one. The Indian councils exercised jurisdiction over the internal affairs of their respective nations, while each individual nation also sent its council to form a Grand Council of all confederated nations to deal with matters of common concern (i.e., inter-national affairs). In this manner, the general regulation of human group interaction was established from New England to the Mississippi River. The Grand Council declared war and made peace, entered into treaties of alliance, accepted new tribes and nations into the League, and gave protection to small independent bands or tribes which lacked in resources. This was early North American democracy, federalism, and a vehicle for the administration of rational international relations--and, it should also be remembered that the most successful economies in the modern world have grown up in countries with democratic political structures inspired by First Nations!

References

* Weatherford, Jack, *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988

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EXERCISE 5.2

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' BEHAVIOUR*

OBJECTIVES

1. To broaden the concept of acceptable cultural activities that are central to the contemporary lives of first peoples.
2. To help participants see that many activities which were not practiced traditionally are consistent with traditional attitudes and beliefs.
3. To help participants, as members of first peoples of North America, see that their behaviour is *what they do*, not what the larger society thinks they *should* do or what their ancestors did.
4. To encourage participants to reflect on individual and community activities which are rooted in traditional behaviours.

TIME REQUIRED

45 minutes

MATERIALS

A "First Peoples" Behaviour sheet for each participant

PROCESS DIRECTIONS FOR FACILITATOR

1. Begin by discussing the issue of what behaviours Native people tend to engage in more than non-Natives. What do Native North Americans do that makes them culturally distinct? What community, family, or individual activities are rooted in Indian traditions?
2. Ask participants to examine the *First Nations' Behaviour Sheet*, then discuss the behaviours identified. Instruct students to add other contemporary behaviours based on their own personal, community, or family experience.
3. In groups of four or five, have participants discuss the chart and explore their ideas of what First Peoples' behaviour is. Ask them to especially note the more subtle, non-

* This exercise is derived from *The NESA Activities Handbook for Native and Multicultural Classrooms*, Volume 2, compiled by Don Sawyer and Art Napoleon. Vancouver: Tilacum Library, 1991, pp. 27-29.

material contemporary activities.

DEBRIEFING

Focus on helping participants see that acting "Indian" involves far more than traditional material activities (such as beadwork, dancing, tanning hides, etc.) It involves many activities that are less obviously Indian, but which are nonetheless rooted in (or consistent with) Native traditions. Emphasize that the essence of being Indian manifests itself not only in material ways, but also in non-material ways. Indian behaviour—what you carry in your heart and head, the ways in which you relate with other people or raise your children, for example—are those things that are influenced by your Native perspective, experience, culture, beliefs, and self-perception. Here are some questions that might stimulate thought:

What is distinctive about the behaviour of First Nations' people? What isn't? Can you be an Aboriginal North American and not engage in aboriginal behaviour?

What things do you do that are rooted in traditional culture? Your family? Your community? Which of these would not immediately be identified as "Indian" by the larger society?

What pressures have you felt to conform to others' perceptions of what being part of a First Nation or of aboriginal ancestry involves? Where do these pressures come from? How can you deal with them in an assertive, positive way?

How do many contemporary activities serve to maintain traditional roles, values, beliefs, etc.? How can many activities that are non-traditional (e.g., a spaghetti dinner) still meet social, spiritual, and emotional needs that are rooted in the past?

Are some of these activities negative? What are the alternatives?

FIRST PEOPLES' BEHAVIOUR SHEET - MATERIAL & NON-MATERIAL ASPECTS

	Traditional	Contemporary
M	• Berry picking	• Food gathering
A	• Fishing	• Hunting
T	• Trapping	• Fishing
E	• Hunting	• Trapping
R	• Strength-building	• Food preservation
I	• Salmon drying	• Clothes making
A	• Basket making	• Gardening
L	• Hide tanning	• Home construction
	• Kekule building	• Arts and crafts
	• Art and ornamentation	• Dancing
	• Rug making	• Sports activities
	• Dancing	• Strength-building
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____

	Traditional	Contemporary
N	• Language	• Holding potluck and other community gatherings
O	• Child rearing activities	• Holding family gatherings
N	• Community gatherings	• Honouring elders
-	• Community and tribal identity	• Respecting relations
M	• Family gatherings	• Child rearing
A	• Honouring elders	• Developing a strong sense of community
T	• Actions respectful of natural world	• Participation in environmental activist groups
E	• Sharing and being supportive	• Sharing and being supportive
R	• Accepting	• Accepting
I	• Storytelling	• _____
A	• _____	• _____
L	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____

EXERCISE 5.3

FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURE THEN AND NOW

PURPOSE

To encourage participants to both reflect on how indigenous North American cultures have changed since their existence prior to contact with Europeans and to identify and analyze the core elements that remain important.*

TIME REQUIRED

1 hour

MATERIALS

"First Nations' Culture Then and Now" sheets for each participant

FACILITATOR'S INSTRUCTIONS

This exercise is intended to facilitate the beginnings of an examination of culture from the abstract to the personal and concrete. Group leaders should orchestrate a brainstorm to generate the selection of the elements that participants may wish to examine. It should be remembered that the personal nature of the task should be emphasized, however: participants will feel they have contributed more if the ideas and conclusions are their own.

Procedure

1. Hand out "First Nations' Culture, Traditional and Contemporary" sheets.
2. Explain that participants are to write down, from their own experience and perspective, major elements of Native culture (preferably concentrating on their own specific cultural group) in three categories—skills, knowledge, and attitudes. These are to be classified traditional, contemporary, and future. For example, what were traditional Native attitudes? Which of these will still be valid and important in the future?
3. After students have completed their grids, have them divide into groups of three and discuss their responses. Then come back into a large group and debrief. Using the talking circle method, have participants speak about what Native culture means to them and how it applies to contemporary situations.

* This exercise is also drawn from the *NESA Activities Handbook* (see previous footnote), pp.30-31.

DEBRIEFING

This exercise brings culture home; it makes the youth realize that it is a real, living thing. The exercise is designed to help people see that while Native culture has gone through enormous and often painful changes, many key elements are still intact, relevant, and vital. Encourage students, in group discussion, to reflect on the personal relevance of their cultural traditional, and how others view the issue.

How has Native culture evolved? How has Western society evolved? What Native traditions are especially critical in today's world? Which will be important tomorrow? Which sectors are most relevant?

Ask participants to answer the following questions: What aspects of Western (Canadian/North American/Industrial) society do you think should be rejected? What should be accepted and promoted? Then facilitate a discussion regarding cultural choices—and their right to make such choices and to be proud of them.

NATIVE CULTURE : YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

	Traditional	Contemporary	Future
SKILLS			
ATTITUDES			
KNOWLEDGE			

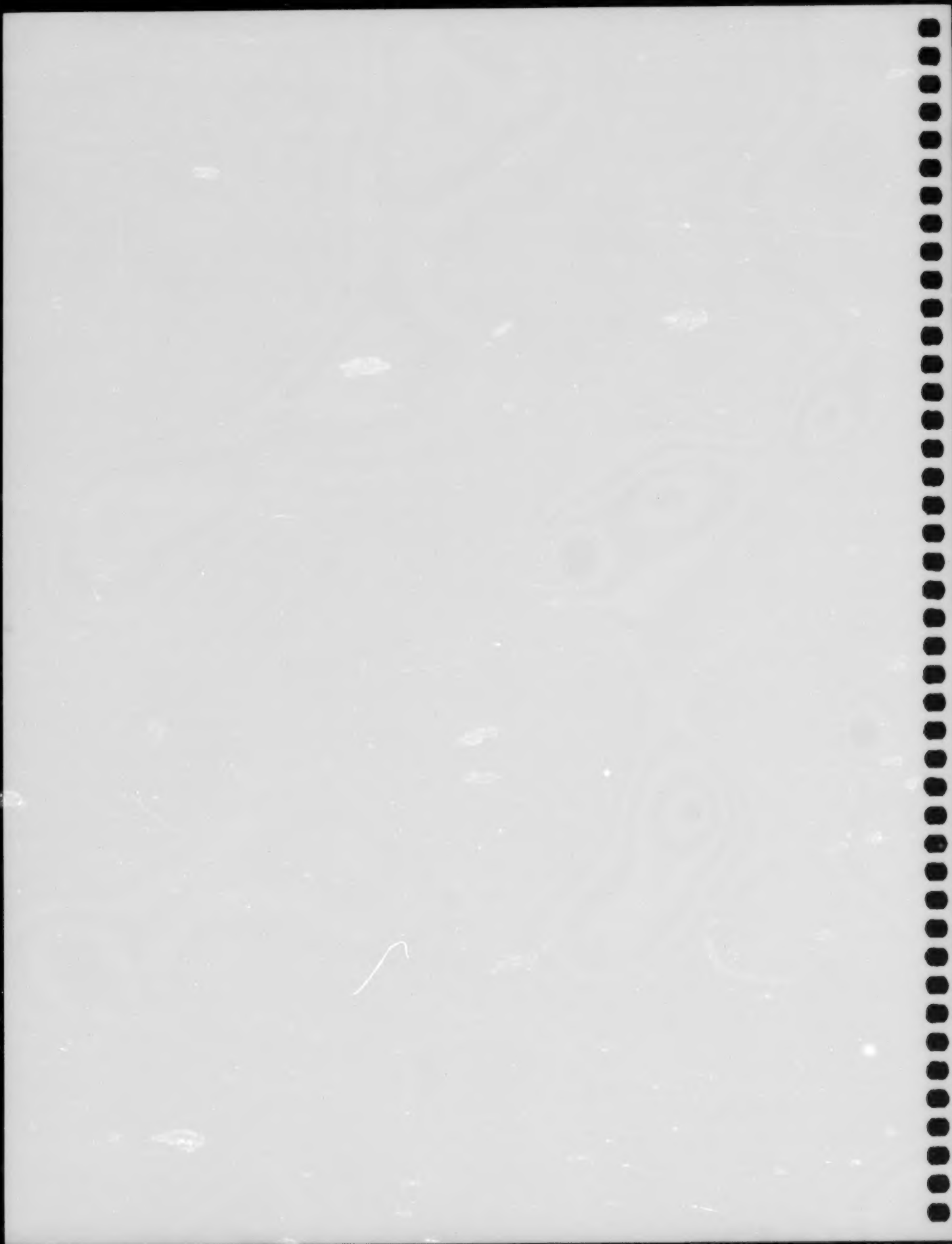


STAGE 6

STYLES OF THINKING & SOCIAL ACTION THAT EMPOWERS

This stage contains the most important lesson of the entire Vision Seekers program. The exercises carefully take the participants through a systematic learning process that teaches rational thinking and positive social choice-making. If the participants are able to internalize the lessons to be drawn from the exercises presented herein, they will have gained enormously from the program. Even if they drop out after successful participation in these exercises, program staff can still count Vision Seekers as successful products of the program. In this instance, "success" simply means actually learning the cognitive styles and social skills presented.

It is because of the importance of this stage of the program that the exercises are prefaced by some detailed background notes for Program Directors or other facilitators of the exercises.



EXERCISES 6.1-6.3

OVERVIEW: FOUNDATIONS OF A HEALTHY PROBLEM-SOLVING STYLE

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

The key to healthy thinking is to understand the vital connection between our thoughts, feelings, social pressures and actions—and to make a habit of thinking and acting based upon that connection. The exercises below are intended to train Vision Seekers in the *thinking* and *personal* and *social action skills* that enable an individual to replace unnecessary thoughts that lead to sadness, low self-esteem or anger, or to unsatisfying and high risk social relations. In their place, they should learn to substitute a healthy mix of optimism, rational decision-making skills, realistic goals and effective social skills.

The core ideas in this series of exercises flow from sociocognitive self-management theory, which is founded on the ideas of cognitive-behavioural psychology but which also demands that we frame that process within its social context. Essentially, our model of explanation, which also provides the foundation for our model of intervention (a problem-solving strategy), is that adverse circumstances and disruptive events *can* result in seemingly uncontrollable frustration and counterproductive reactions— but they don't have to!

Sociocognitive self-management theory assumes that specific circumstances that can be disruptive are catalogued and filed in our memory traces as *types of problems* that call for specific *types of solutions*. Further, specific interpretations of potentially disruptive events or circumstances *and* expectations of our reactions to them are also influenced by others. Often, even typically, they are reinforced by a memory of an important social influence in our lives (parents, teachers, friends) or by the people who are immediate witnesses to or present when we experience such events or circumstances. Ultimately, the challenge of a healthy, personal lifestyle is to examine our past "programming" *vis a vis* potentially disruptive events, our personal beliefs about how we *should* react to them, and the social expectations that we allow to influence our thoughts and actions. If we don't learn to reprocess and replace much of the negative psychological programming and social transactions that shape our behaviour, then life can involve a sort of constant *reexperiencing* of all the miseries of our past. The challenge is to choose our own attitudes and actions rather than being chained to the influences of the past and the people that surround us in the present tense.

Let's take this thought sequence at a slower pace.

In response to disruptive events, we human beings often seem to be powerless to respond in ways that we personally control: We *react* rather than consciously think or act. We throw up our hands and submit to a "programmed" or "scripted" reaction which is, virtually, a

conditioned response.

A wide range of situations and events can result in extreme emotional discomfort because of previous social learning: We have been socialized into making mental associations between external stimuli and specific outcomes. When we encounter certain events or behaviours of other people we react with an emotion and an almost reflexive method of dealing with that emotion (e.g., He insults me>I feel hurt>I insult him back). The capacity to interrupt that chain of escalating interpersonal damage and to alter our early, learned response, to our advantage, is a specifically human gift.

Sociocognitive self-management theory provides tools that help us control our responses to events—and it also teaches us, over the long-term, to reduce the number of such events that we encounter. In response to our discomforting reactions to adverse circumstances and disruptive events, sociocognitive self-management theory teaches us how to make *constructive substitutions* for our thoughts and actions.

But what is the basic nature of these automatic mental associations with various classes of events that tend, with such predictability, to instigate hurt and anger or other kinds of psychological pain? In fact, many, perhaps most of these associations, stand as our first line defense system against all kinds of unpleasant or dangerous psychological, social and physical outcomes. Without learning signs of danger or circumstances that could easily lead to our personal humiliation and a battery of rapid defenses against them, we would have difficulty surviving in the world. We couldn't drive a car or engage in basic conversation if we had to constantly question the most fundamental elements of either. In short, it is a basic human survival strategy to *train* our dependents — and later to train ourselves — how to identify and respond to dangerous or disadvantageous circumstances.

Unfortunately, some of the feelings we have acquired about past circumstances can overwhelm us when we apply them to similar circumstances in the present—and overwhelm us unnecessarily. By projecting past thoughts and emotions on to current circumstances we may find ourselves overcome with psychological discomfort and pain in the form of anxiety, sadness, anger and even rage.

Further, some of the ways we have learned to react may be counterproductive today; they may even make the problem worse. Our reactions may involve actions that unnecessarily hurt other people and they can result in circumstances that are even worse for us than the negative experience that triggered our emotional pain in the first place.

The solution to this *automatic-feeling-and-reacting-trap* lies in putting our negative associations into perspective and taking the time to consider how we might alternatively think about adverse experiences and deal with them in more constructive ways.

Fortunately, we can learn to consciously confront our negative experiences, both intellectually (our thinking strategies) and socially (how we interact with other people), and recast their affect on us. We learn to place ourselves in a position to avoid being overwhelmed and preoccupied with disturbing thoughts and their accompanying emotions and we learn to manage the types of interactions with people who victimize us or who in other ways

encourage our self-destructive or anti-social thinking or behaviours. The long-range goal of sociocognitive self-management theory is to teach people overwhelmed by circumstances — or too easily overwhelmed by adverse events — to significantly increase their power to control their reactions to events and to preoccupy themselves with healthy, comforting and practical thoughts—and with healthy, positively functional social interactions.

The exercises at this stage are intended to assist young teens in developing cognitive and social styles that will help them overcome their adversity and concentrate on healthy thoughts and empowering social interactions.



EXERCISE 6.1

HEALTHY PROBLEM-SOLVING: LINKING THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE

To clarify the linkage between thoughts, feelings and mental and social actions.

INSTRUCTIONS

The facilitator should begin with a few anecdotes that will serve as a basis for drawing the lessons of Sociocognitive Learning Theory. The following is offered as an example:

Facilitator: Many people believe that when we feel bad there are external causes or 'stressors' or adversities that occur to us—and that these are what *cause* our bad feelings.

We feel depressed when we lose something or someone that we care a great deal about.

We feel angry when someone does something that hurts us physically or hurts our feelings.

It is true that the events in our lives are indeed connected to our feelings but, fortunately, this connection is not as strong as we think.

We can learn to think and act in relation to other people in a way that minimizes and even prevents emotional pain and the further negative consequences that often follow from it. In short, we have amazing potential to control and manage the circumstances of our lives. Each of us can have a lot of **PERSONAL POWER!!!**

Have the Vision Seekers repeat the phrase two or three times:

I am powerful!

I am strong!

I can control my sadness!

I can control my anger!

I can resist the temptations and pressures of other people!

I make my own choices!

I will live by a vision of what is good and right for me!

I am a Vision Seeker!

Let me give you an example of what I have been talking about.

Debbie and Cheryl, both 15 years old, lived beside each other at the Broken Tomahawk Reserve in a southern prairie area of Canada. They were classmates in an off-reserve school where they had both just finished Grade 9. They were also good friends, essentially having grown up together and having shared many experiences, including sports, academic and social successes and failures, and a knowledge of their first intimacies.

In the summer, immediately after school was over, Debbie and Cheryl decided to go camping in the north together. They had considered various spots, asking friends, adults and some teachers, and they finally decided on a remote outfitter's camp across from a beach.

The beach opposite the camp was a moderately popular spot, a place that was fairly quiet and remote but also a place that always attracted a small group of young people from towns and cities who liked the "great outdoors" and would come to the camp on weekends in the summers.

The spot was perfect for the girls. They would have a real outdoor experience during the week, almost living a traditional lifestyle, and they might meet some other kids — especially boys — by canoeing down to the end of the lake on the weekend.

Cheryl's dad agreed to drive them and, with a tent, backpacks, a cooler and three duffle bags full of supplies, they headed off to the camp where they were given a camping spot and were able to rent a canoe for a minimum hour at a time. Both girls agreed that the setting was beautiful, including all of its fresh pine aromas, animal sounds, the stillness of the lake, and the rich textures, tones and colours of the forest and its clearings—although Debbie was far less enthusiastic about the aesthetics than was Cheryl.

After they set up, the owner and director of the outfitter's camp, who was the only person at the camp that week, said he had to go to town for two days to get supplies. He'd phone at 6:00 p.m. the night of the next day to see that they were all right. They should be by the pay phone near his residence at that time.

Early the next morning, it started to rain—and it rained and it rained and it rained! The wind grew strong from the lake and a large branch from a large birch tree fell on one end of the tent (luckily, the girls had been outside of it at the time), then the wind blew in gusts so hard that the stakes of the tent came free and the tent went down. The outfitter's cabin was locked and the only shelter they had was a half-enclosed firewood shelter that they made a makeshift bench on. On the bench they sat watching the rain come down and listening to the threatening wind. They ate canned beans and worried, hoping the rain would soon go away.

About mid-afternoon the rain subsided to a light drizzle and Cheryl suggested they go to the beach. The edge of the lake was not too rough, so it'd be worth it, she said. "Otherwise we'll have to sit here for who knows how long. At least over there, there might be a shelter and a place to get some snacks or a meal." So the girls borrowed

a canoe from the camp and paddled along the edge of the lake to the other side.

When they arrived at the beach, they found the concession closed and the only sign of human life was some older boys, maybe sixteen to eighteen years old, with a tent and a campfire going in a slightly sheltered area outside the tent. The boys were friendly enough and they let them warm up in their tent and gave them some hot dogs. But the girls were made a little nervous when they caught one of the boys winking at another one. Debbie said, "I think we better get going now, you know, to fix our tent and all!" The boys made no effort to dissuade them. In fact, they said they had to pack up and leave soon themselves.

On their way to their canoe, they saw some other boys in a rowboat approaching the shore down the beach a ways. The girls didn't think much of it at the time but they thought they saw a fry pan in the boat that looked a lot like their own and the same kind of duffel bags. But they were nervous and they wanted to get away in case the boys had some ideas about taking advantage of them, maybe getting a little rough, going too far. So the girls got in their canoe and made their way back to their own camp.

When Debbie and Cheryl arrived back at the beach by the outfitter's camp, they realized the time had flown by and it was after 6:00 p.m.; in fact it was almost 7:00 o'clock, so they had missed the call from the Outfitter who owned the campground. They would have to spend the night alone, maybe in the rain, which had already shifted again from a drizzle to a moderate pour.

The girls then went back to their campsite and were surprised to find that their tent had been ripped in many places by the wind and falling branches. They also found that all of their food was gone, thinking that it was probably taken by a bear, which made them more than a little frightened. Then the girls saw that their backpacks, cutlery, cooking utensils, and duffel bags were missing. As their hearts fell, an image of the boys in the canoe came immediately to mind.

Debbie and Cheryl decided to go looking for the boys. In the camp canoe they had used earlier, they paddled as fast as they could back to the other end of the beach but found no traces of the boys when they got there. Then, feeling frustrated, desolate and starting to get very angry, they returned in the canoe to their own encampment, arriving just before dark. They faced a night sitting in the firewood shelter, hungry and afraid of the animals or any intruders who might come by.

Luckily, just as the sun went down, the Outfitter returned, saying that he was worried when the girls didn't answer the phone. He knew it was raining so he decided he'd better come back. Cheryl said she really appreciated it but Debbie was just sullen, almost scowling at the Outfitter as if it had all been his fault.

The Outfitter talked the situation over with them and they decided, on Debbie's insistence, that they should just drive back to the closest town where they could get a motel room and return home the next day. On the way, Cheryl and the Outfitter

found some humour in what happened to the girls but Debbie was just silent, once saying: "I'm just not in the mood to laugh! It was a real bummer!" When the Outfitter looked at her, Debbie really did scowl, making him very uncomfortable and wondering why he had gone out of his way for the girls—or at least for Debbie.

Though the experience was the same for both girls, they reacted to it quite differently.

On the bus the next day, Debbie just wanted to talk about anything but the camping experience and when she did she complained or expressed her lingering anger.

Cheryl was a study in contrast to Debbie. By the time they arrived back at the Reserve, Cheryl was bursting with the story of the "so-called Indians who couldn't stand a little rain." She couldn't wait to tell jokes to her friends and family about their predicament. She also found herself thinking about the beautiful country in the north, with the beautiful pine forest, fresh air and beautiful lakes, and wanting to go back someday soon, but to be a little more prepared.

Debbie, on the other hand, told everyone that it was a big disappointment and she didn't want to ever talk about it, just to get on with something more fun during the vacation. She also said that, with her luck, probably nothing much good would happen anyway.

Now let's think about what happened here. The girls confronted the same events and those events were pretty overwhelming and put a pretty major damper (literally) on their plans for the weekend. It kind of spoiled their fun, or at least the fun they'd expected to have. They were pretty fixed on a specific type of fun: living in a tent, exploring the wilderness, swimming, and relaxing, meeting some fun boys on the weekend who be fund and would like them. But things turned out very different than what they had hoped for.

Let's call the unwelcome circumstances "Disruptive Events" (or DE) and let's call the results of these disappointments "C" for consequences (i.e., the emotional consequences, such as anger, anxiety or some other form of psychological discomfort).

DE = DISRUPTIVE EVENTS OR ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES

C = (EMOTIONAL) CONSEQUENCES OF EXPERIENCING 'DE'

People have a tendency to think that the events that disappoint us *cause* that disappointment and its accompanying anger, anxiety or sadness. In fact, it is how we have learned to think about events and/or act upon those events that determine just how disappointed we are and whether or not that disappointment rules our lives. The challenge of socio-cognitive learning skills is to teach people how they can be in charge of their emotions and their reactions to disappointing, depressing, and potentially provocative events.

You've all heard of martial arts which teach you physical self-defense skills. Actually, they also teach you some mental self-defense skills—and they are not very different than socio-cognitive learning theory.

To simplify the types of skills we are talking about, think about the following short form of a model that describes unhealthy (irrational or inappropriate) problem-solving styles. We regard these styles as unhealthy because rather than relieving psychological pain they tend to result in more rather than less pain to one's self. They also tend to affect other people negatively (e.g., irrational anger leads to verbal abuse and assaults) and they often invite social reactions that have result in further grief for the person upset in the first place.

In our model, DE = *disruptive event(s)* or, in other words, a *potentially* disappointing circumstance that occurs to us, while B is the *beliefs* we have that determine the way we think we should react to DE and C = the consequences that *appear* to result from the event—or, more accurately, from a learned association between the event and the expectation of anxiety, sadness or anger. But if you think about it, the event itself is *not* disappointing; it is only disappointing to us *after* we have interpreted it or other people have communicated to us their expectation that we be disappointed. Often, perhaps typically, other people not only convey to us their expectations regarding how we should feel and act in response to an external event; they often even suggest to us that we be disappointed in a particular way (e.g. It isn't appropriate to laugh raucously at funerals).

It is true that many of our negative reactions to circumstances seem almost automatic, leaving virtually no time for interpretation. Actually, most of our reactions to circumstances that we consider adverse are almost automatic: We immediately respond to many events and circumstances in predictable ways. We become anxious, sad, frightened or angry. But virtually all of these we have learned, with the exception of certain basic reflexes that come with the genetics of infancy. And many events that we think *should* make us sad or angry don't because, over time, just like any other kind of training, their full impact diminishes.

As we get older or if our parents haven't spent a lot of time training us in how we should feel about various things, we find that we don't react the way we should to events that may be very painful to other people. In other words, we don't react the way that others expect us to react. In short, our interpretations of how to act are taught to us socially (by other people) and we are reminded and encouraged in our responses by the expectations of others. So, in other words, 'DE (a disruptive event) only results in negative C (the consequence of painful emotions) when we allow our learned beliefs or thoughts about how we are supposed to react (T) or when we allow our friends, teachers, family members or people in our presence when the event occurs (S [society]) to influence the way we think and feel about an event or circumstance.

What this means is that someone doesn't "make us angry" or "make us hit them" and people don't make us sad. We let them.

As children, when our behaviour is largely controlled by grown-ups, much of what we do seems to be forced and, for all intents and purposes it is. But with other kids, at school, or on the playground, we tend to choose our own reactions a little more often—and as we get older, if we understand the concept of *emotional self-management*, our freedom to choose our reaction to circumstances can expand enormously. Increasingly, we make choices about how we will feel about friends, death, the plight of others, or our own circumstances. We

choose how we will react. If we don't get hold of our emotions, then we don't really grow up—and society treats us that way, like children in need of parental supervision. Our freedoms are taken away by being incarcerated for "acting out" by hurting other people or hospitalized for acting in self-destructive ways.

As human beings, we live with few if any instincts: For the most part, we rely on learning from other people to grow and thrive. In short, our context for interpreting most events is one in which learning generally takes place socially: We learn (and often relearn) our expected reactions from others. Indeed, even when there are no people immediately present to indicate their expectations to us, we have internalized a model of how we think people in our immediate social network will react. Thus our model of explanation should read as follows:

DE-T-S-C-AT (DETSCAT)

In our model DE (disruptive event) triggers T(a learned thought that instantaneously interprets the event) and invites S, which is a current active, external social reaction (or at least what we think it might be) and C is the consequence, which is the emotional pain we dutifully suffer. Finally, AT is our externalized or internalized reaction to the emotional pain: It is the *action taken* as a response to the feeling. It could be to indulge in an overwhelming sadness, gut-wrenching sense of disappointment and pain, or to feel angry, focusing it with a sense of injustice or targeted revenge.

Stated simply, we *learn* how to react to a wide range of troublesome situations (circumstances we automatically consider to be negative). Sometimes the circumstances that we experience seem to be consistently negative or humongous, huge, in their impact. They fall into the category of awful or incredibly bad or horrible and we are immobilized by them. We don't think we can do anything but feel incredibly awful or incredibly angry and act towards ourselves or others in ways that show those feelings.

But what if we decide to take that explanatory model and use it to our advantage rather than letting it rule the link between events and our emotional reactions. Surely most of us would like to avoid as much pain in life as we can and achieve as much pleasure as is possible, so the idea is tempting. Most of us would be pretty tempted by the possibility that we might, as a rule, as a habit, alter the interpretations we automatically or semi-automatically give to potentially painful events through the way we think about those events and through the way we act in relation to other people who can potentially reinforce our pain or assist us in avoiding it.

Let's get back to Debbie and Cheryl. Here is what Debbie believed:

Disruptive Event: What a trip! it was the worst two days I've had in years. We had one of the worst storms I've ever been in. We were alone and frightened with no roof over our heads. It was a real slice! Some a-holes stole our things from us. We were damp, dirty, scared of wild animals and we had all our camping stuff ruined or destroyed. And we hoped to meet some guys but the only guys we met ripped us off and didn't seem to want anything to do with us.

Learned Way of Interpreting the Event: Camping is supposed to be relaxing and fun. But it reminds me of a lot of other situations I've been in: Things aren't what they're cracked up to be. People bullshit you. It was just like the kind of screwed up situation that really frustrates me, really pisses me off!

Social Support for Interpretation: The Outfitter had expressed great sympathy for the girls situation, as had the boys who originally offered them some help. When Debbie got home and she told everyone about what a hassle had been, they all expressed sympathy and said they'd feel the same way if they were her.

Consequences: The first couple of days afterward I was miserable. I felt almost embarrassed and I didn't even want to talk to Cheryl. She was bugging me because she made light of it, treated it like it was a big joke. Like the hassles were funny and the funniness of it all made it a good thing. Weird!

Action Taken: Debbie has decided *not* to camp again: It's too much hassle!

ASK PARTICIPANTS HOW DEBBIE MIGHT HAVE ACTED—IN A *POSITIVE* WAY!

Elaboration: Contrast this with Cheryl's response. She got lots of humorous material from the situation. She made herself the butt of jokes for ages afterwards, talking about their return to the "old ways," and the looks on each other's faces when they forgot about the Outfitter's phone call at 6:00 p.m. that they missed and when they returned to the camp and found the tent destroyed, the food ransacked and their camping equipment stolen. In telling these jokes, she entertained people, and they liked her for it. They were laughing with her, just partially *at* her. Cheryl also decided that they had to plan a little better next time, learn a little more about camping, and that to live in the "outdoors" took a great deal of knowledge and skill. It made her think about being a little more respectful of the old ways of First Nations' cultures.

Cheryl's decided she wants to go camping again—and soon, partially to do it right this time and partially because her memories have allowed her to see through the problems they had to remember the outdoor smells and the beauty of the lake and the woods.

The facilitator should get examples from the participants and practice reinterpreting the events in a positive way with the assistance of the group.



EXERCISE 6.2

CHANGING EXPLANATORY STYLES

Troubled young people have a tendency to persistently dispute the opinions of others, often rebelling, almost habitually, against figures of authority. Ironically, they tend to be very conservative in their acceptance of the belief that negative circumstances cause their emotional pain and that they have little control over their emotions. In short, while they are generally prepared to dispute the views of others, they tend to hold dearly to their own ingrained views and emotional triggers.

Fortunately, like most young people, troubled adolescents can also be taught and, if the lessons are relevant to them, they may well be the ones that make a real difference in their lives—the difference between sobriety and being overwhelmed by alcohol and drug abuse, between safe sex and the risks of unplanned pregnancy, AIDS, etc., participating in acts of juvenile delinquency or saying no and, in their futures, the difference between education, employment and economic security vs. under-education, unemployment and poverty. These aren't just important differences; they are *fundamental* quality of life differences!

So how do can you facilitate the learning of these important lessons?

FACILITATOR'S LECTURETTE

The facilitator should present a talk built around the ideas expressed below:

"Have you ever asked yourself Are my own feelings getting the best of me?

"All of us have felt ashamed, angry, depressed, and anxious at one time or another. Whether or not any of these feelings are a problem for us depends on how upset we become and how we handle the feelings. We may have a problem with a feeling if it happens often, lasts a long time, or tends to be intense. We definitely have a problem if our feelings get the best of us and our actions are self-defeating or harmful to others.

We've talked about the fact that it is possible to become aware of your feelings and how you react to them. Today — and on several other days — we're going to practice doing that."

Instructions to Group

"I want you all to find a comfortable spot where you will be free from interruptions for at least five minutes. Close your eyes and think about those times when you were most upset or your actions were most self-defeating. Give yourself the freedom to follow your

feelings wherever they lead. Feel free to terminate any scene or the entire exercise if a memory becomes too painful. After five minutes or so, jot down three or four of the situations you identified, along with the source of your reaction to the situation *if* you can remember (how and from whom you learned to react to the situation), *if* and who influenced your feelings, how you felt after the situation, how you behaved as a result of those feelings, and the results of that behaviour.

Show some examples on a blackboard or flipchart.

DISRUPTIVE EVENT OR FRUSTRATING CIRCUMSTANCES (Briefly Describe):

THOUGHTS (About how you should feel when confronted with such a situation):

SOCIAL REACTION (Does (or did) anyone influence your feelings in the situation
[Or did you think about what others might think in watching your reaction]):

CONSEQUENCES:

How would you describe your feelings in reaction to the event?

ACTION(S) TAKEN: What did you do in response to your feelings?

Analysis of Situation

What happened after you reacted?

Were you or anyone else hurt or negatively effected by what you did?

Is there a more constructive way that you could have reacted?

Elaboration

Ask the participants: "Do you have certain feelings more often than others? Are certain kinds of situations — for instance, those related to family, school or sports or your social life, may be your friendships or relationships with the opposite sex— difficult for you? Does your behaviour get out of hand when you experience certain feelings? Describe the feelings that cause you the most trouble."

Plausible Discussion line:

"Let's talk again about the source of our upset feelings.

"Most of us believe that our feelings have an external cause. Just as turning a light switch produces light, we think that what others do or what happens to us causes our

feelings. This idea is expressed in our language:

- He made me angry.
- She scared me.
- It depressed me.

Sporting events clearly show that the belief that someone or something causes our feelings is wrong. If feelings were directly triggered by events, everybody would feel the same about an event. But when one team scores, that team's fans are pleased, while the opponents' fans are unhappy. Right!

Our feelings are caused more by our thoughts about events rather than by the events themselves and our thoughts about events tend to be strongly influenced by other people.

While we have a tendency to think that the events that disappoint us *cause* that disappointment and its accompanying anger, anxiety or sadness, in fact it is how we have learned to think about those events and/or act upon those events that determine just how disappointed we are and whether or not that disappointment rules our lives. The purpose of socio-cognitive training is to show us how to defend ourselves against ways of thinking and behaving that we have learned or which are encouraged by people around us but which tend to be counterproductive: They hurt us or encourage us to hurt others.

Socio-cognitive training teaches us how to be in charge of how we think, feel and act in response to events that might cause such extreme pain that we can't handle it very well. You've all heard of martial arts which teach you physical self-defense skills. Sociocognitive learning skills are mental and social self-defense skills. They are the Tae-kwon-do of life skills.

In the next exercise, we'll go over a specific model of skill development that will, with practice, prove to be very empowering for you. To simplify the types of skills we are talking about, think about the following short form of the model. Stated simply, we learn how to react to circumstances, including both positive and negative ways of reacting. Often, these are appropriate but, sometimes, they are irrational or inappropriate and rather than solving our problems, they create new ones.

Sometimes we develop dysfunctional or unhealthy *styles* or *patterns* of thinking that are generally unhealthy. Sometimes the circumstances that we experience seem to be consistently negative or of a seemingly intolerable scale. They are incredibly bad or horrible and we are immobilized by them. We don't think we can do anything but feel incredibly awful or incredibly angry and act towards ourselves or others in ways that show those feelings.

But what if we decide to take that explanatory model and use it to our advantage rather than letting it rule the link between events and our emotional reactions. Surely most of us would like to avoid as much pain in life as we can and achieve as much pleasure as is possible, so the idea is tempting. Most of us would be pretty tempted by the

possibility that we might, as a rule, as a habit, alter the interpretations we automatically or semi-automatically give to potentially painful events. We can do just that! How? We can do it by altering the way we think about those events and by consciously interacting in advantageous ways with other people who can potentially reinforce our pain or assist us in avoiding it.

Discarding the *Should* and *Ought* Instructions of Others and Replacing them with our Own Principles

"Should," or words with similar meaning like "ought" or "must," express the unrealistic and self-centred demand that we get our way. *Should's* expressed to us by others—for example, "You should get caught up in your homework" or "You shouldn't be so miserable with your sister"—usually generate anger. *Should's* directed at ourselves turn the anger inward, creating depression: for example, "I shouldn't have failed that exam" or "I should have played a better hockey game."

Changing our Feelings through Rethinking and Social Action

The facilitator should introduce the exercise with a talk that outlines the essential skills of the sociocognitive approach. The following would suffice:

"Have you ever felt so upset that you did something you regretted? Of course! It's a safe bet that all of us have had this experience. For those of us with addictions or emotional problems, this situation may happen so often that our lives seem out of control. Sometimes our upset feelings lead to self-defeating behaviour, negative results, more upset feelings, more self-defeating behaviour, and so on into a vicious cycle. Jack seeks Bill look at him and laugh/Jack suspects he is being ridiculed and he has been taught that ridicule should not be tolerated if his self-respect is to be maintained/Jack feels angry/Jack hits Bill and breaks three of his knuckles and hurts Bill, who then becomes his enemy.

"The challenge is to break out of this vicious cycle because it isn't productive.

"I'm going to teach how you can help you break out of this vicious cycle and gain greater control over your life. No magic is involved. Completing the exercises will give you the skills you need to feel better and accomplish more of your personal goals. Remember, however, that this change of behaviour will take time to learn. The more you practice it, the better you will be at it.

"Expect to feel some awkwardness when you begin applying these new thoughts. Keep in mind that any new behaviour feels awkward until it

becomes automatic. Remember how uncomfortable you felt when you first began riding a bicycle? Now, with years of practice behind you, riding a bike probably feels very natural."

In your own words, continue with your gist of the following:

As we've already seen, the technique involves the following:

1. **Identifying irrational or inappropriate thoughts and substituting rational, appropriate thoughts.**
2. **Identifying and overcoming social pressures that reinforce irrational or inappropriate beliefs.**
3. **Learning to choose and enact our own chosen responses to events rather than reacting with a learned, semi-automatic action or inaction.**

Feelings: what do we call them?

Many of us are not used to talking about our feelings, or even knowing what what we are feeling at any given time. To talk about our feelings, we must identify them with words. We'll keep it simple by focussing on four types of upset feelings (listed at the top of the next page).

No one feels good all the time. Since you are a fallible human being, you'll occasionally have upsetting thoughts. Try not to "awfulize" these thoughts or engage in self-devaluation because of them. Instead, treat them as opportunities to practice and improve your skills. Look for progress, not perfection.

We have learned how to analyze an upsetting situation using the DETSCAT process. To do this, we describe the event (DE); identify our upsetting thoughts (T)—our *should's*, *awful's*, *self-devaluation's*; identify any significant source of social reinforcement (i.e., someone else acting as our own conscience or pressuring us into doing something); and C: label our upset feelings (shame, anger, depression, anxiety) resulting from our semi-automatic thoughts; and then we identify the people and the motivations of the people who are reinforcing our upset feelings and then describe the actions we normally take because of them (AT).

Description alone, however, will not change our feelings or behaviour. Since our thinking produces our feelings in large part, we need to change our thinking in order to feel better.

So, what are the thoughts that we want to alter, to change? According to psychologist Albert Ellis, there are three categories of thoughts that most types of irrational or inappropriate beliefs fit into.

Should Beliefs: "Should," or words with similar meaning like "ought" or "must," express the unrealistic and self-centred demand that we get our way. Such words, when expressed to others—for instance, "You should take better care of your appearance," or "You should

work harder at your schoolwork" — usually make people angry. When such words are directed at ourselves, we direct the anger inward and create sadness or depression. For example, "I shouldn't have lost that race," or "I shouldn't have failed that exam."

Awful Beliefs: When we use words like "awful" or "horrible" to describe a situation, we make it appear worse than it is. "Awfulizing" past events (failing a grade, forgetting to watch a little sister or brother carefully before they had an accident) usually creates feelings of depression in us. "Awfulizing" future events (for example, imagining people won't accept you in a new school situation or at a dance) creates unnecessary anxiety or panic. It can also lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, if you are convinced that you are going to play a terrible game of hockey or golf or that you are going to do badly on an exam, your anxiety and tension makes it very difficult to concentrate and you are likely to perform poorly.

Unnecessary Self-Depreciation (Put Down) Beliefs: When we make wide-reaching generalizations of a negative or put-down nature, we are usually simplifying, expressing bitterness or an immediate sense of anger directed at other people. When we do it to ourselves, calling ourselves worthless or stupid or incompetent, we are creating shame.

Substituting Healthy Thoughts

None of these thoughts are productive; instead, they are self-defeating. And **all** of these thoughts can be substituted with rational and appropriate thoughts that do not cause further problems but solve the immediate ones. Further, learning this *style of reasoning* serves to overcome unhealthy thinking patterns.

Specifically, we want to replace our three upsetting ideas with the following more neutral alternatives.

- Replace *shoulds* with less demanding phrases that convey preferences such as "I'd like," "I'd prefer," or "I wish."
- Replace *awfuls* with milder and more realistic alternatives such as "It's inconvenient" or "It's unpleasant."
- Replace *self-depreciation* with realistic phrases, such as, "I'm a fallible human being, and human beings make mistakes." This promotes self-acceptance.

Here's some more examples of upsetting thoughts replaced by more neutral alternatives

Upsetting Thought: "My depression proves that I am worthless."

More Neutral Thought: "My depression says nothing about me as a person. I am fallible, I have problems, like everyone else. I'm depressed right now but

I can change that condition—and I will."

Upsetting Thought: "My friend shouldn't treat me as bad as he does."

More Neutral Thought: "I'd like my buddy to do some things differently."

Upsetting Thought: "I can't stand school."

More Neutral Thought: "Lots about school bugs me but I can handle the hassles."

Upsetting Thought: "I'll never be able to overcome my shyness and be a popular person."

More Neutral Thought: "I can work slowly at getting comfortable talking to different people. Gradually I'll get the confidence and skill to comfortably handle any social situation. My guess is that when I'm comfortable with other people, they'll be comfortable with me. I guess that's being popular, eh!"

Negative Social Influences

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of social influences that promote irrational and inappropriate thinking and behaviour: (1) the influences originating with people who reinforce an individual's irrational or inappropriate thinking and reaction patterns and (2) the influence of those who encourage or initiate self-destructive or antisocial behaviour patterns. Either of these may be simply people whose influence is embedded in our minds or people in direct contact with us, such as friends or family members.

Avoid being Victimized by the Expectations of Others: Responding to Negative Social Influences by Taking Charge of Your Side of Social Interactions

Fortunately, we can:

- *Replace the negative influence of others with our own positive thoughts.* For example, you might reinterpret the intentions of those who are bugging you about a less than standard hockey performance by realizing that the group bugging you has placed the value of winning a game above the value of playing for fun and above the value of support for a friend or acquaintance—and you have completely different priorities. Or you might consider the fact that you are part of the team and that they are just encouraging you to improve your play for the good of the team. As a member of the team, you benefit as well. With your critics, you might make light of their negative words or just ignore them. Or you might dispute their priorities with dogged persistence until they get your point; whether they change or not, they'll come to respect your values. Or you say, "Yeah, I know, I'm going to try harder. I really screwed up!" There are more choices than you think, and most of them leave you feeling better than just getting down in the dumps over some mistakes you've made

in a game. They'll gradually get the idea that you can handle criticism and don't take it personally or that you don't accept exaggerated, personal attacks. You will feel more independently minded, more in charge of your own feelings.

- *Avoid negative influences.* If you find that peers just won't listen to you when you try to get them to change their attitudes and ways of relating to you, then you might simply avoid them, at least until they get the point.
- *Avoid high risk circumstances.* Hanging out in certain places often means to invite disruptive events, while avoiding them does really tend to keep us out of trouble. Every town has a place where it's easy to get into a fight, to get in trouble with the law, or to have an accident.
- *Ways to Say 'No' to people demanding more of you than you're willing to give*

Time Limits

1. Communicate full support for the person initiating contact:
"I'm glad you got in touch with me."
2. Express your desire to be a good and caring listener for this person:
"I'm really concerned about you (or your problem)."
"I want to be able to give you my full attention and take as long as we need."
3. State your limitations:
"I have to _____ right now, so I can't meet you."
"Class starts in 5 minutes and I have to be there."
4. Suggest an alternative: Refer to someone else or defer to another time (be specific):
Non-emergency: "Could you meet me at _____ to talk about this."
Emergency: "Could you meet me at _____ to talk about this."

Values Conflict

1. Communicate full support for the person initiating the contact:
"I'm glad you came to see me about this."
2. State your limitation:
"I'm uncomfortable talking about _____ with you because I believe that there is only one right choice in this situation. I think my beliefs might interfere with my helping you to decide how you want to handle the situation."

3. Express your desire to provide good, caring listening for this person:

"I'm really concerned about you (or your problem):

4. Suggest an alternative: Refer to someone else:

"I think _____ would be able to help you better with this."

"Do you think you'd like to get together with _____ to do it? or "Do you think you'd like to talk to _____ instead of me or maybe with both of us together?"

Energy Limits

1. Communicate full support to the person for initiating the contact:

"I'm glad you came to see me . . ."

2. State your limitation:

"I am totally out of energy right now because of a situation I was just involved in."

3. Express your desire to be a good and caring listener for this person:

"I'm really concerned about you (or your problem)."

4. Suggest an alternative: Refer to someone else or put it off to another time:

"I think would be able to help you better."

"Could you meet me at (s specific time)?"

- *Mix with positive, supportive company.* Another way to reinforce your positive reinterpretations of things is to actively seek out friends or family members who are supportive and who themselves want to avoid trouble, not to seek it out, and who can have fun without doing something at someone else's expense.

- *Operate from a Position of Strength when Dealing with People*

When dealing with people, always operate from a position of strength (Some working guidelines):

- Unless you feel it is disrespectful culturally, when you talk to people, always look directly into their eyes. When you look down or to the side, you send signals that you really aren't sure of yourself.

- Let your body language and posture also communicate self-confidence and personal strength. When you sit, don't slouch. Avoid covering your face with your hands and don't clutch yourself nervously. When you stand, stand as tall as you are.
 - Avoid sending signals that you lack self-confidence in your thinking by avoiding empty pauses and constant "uh-huhs" and "hmmms" and "you knows," "you know what I means" and "don't yuh thinks."
 - If you are a non-smoker and can't stand smoke, get up the courage to say something when other people's smoking bothers you. You don't have to be nasty, just assertive.
 - If someone is a bit of a "mooch" and they're always asking you for something you don't want to give, whether money, possessions like CDs, videos, sports cards, sports equipment, or articles of clothing (e.g., a jacket), or help in doing something, learn to be polite but clear in declining their wish—and give a reason, even if you say it's simply a policy you've adopted lately because you're too busy (if it involves help) or because, lately, you have been trying to keep better track of your things (if it involves borrowing).
 - When you deal with strong personalities who are manipulative, you must be clear and firm with them, but not apologetic, anxious or nervous, otherwise they will think they have the advantage and they will press on with their demands.
 - Don't always refrain from sharing personal feelings or giving personal information about yourself, although you shouldn't be overindulgent in this practice. Do get rid of the idea that you can't reveal yourself because it's risky.
 - Whenever someone tells you things have always been one way, or reminds you how others have behaved in the past, and they are obviously doing it to challenge you or get something from you, try asking "I don't really care how things used to be. I do it this way now and it seems to work for me!"
 - Whenever someone compares you or your performance at something with they way that other people perform, reject the comparison, even if it is worth yourself "in the old days." Just say: "Yeah, it's amazing how well Bill plays hockey. I wonder what it would be like to be him "
- How to Deal with People who Victimize You to Achieve their own Ends

Drunks and People who Get High While you may not want to or be able to teach a lesson to anyone who is "stoned," because you know he won't be able to remember much when he sleeps it off, in the immediate situation you can teach him that he can't get anything out of you by being abusive or bullying with you. Drunks who are slobbering or not making any sense but have you cornered will quickly lose interest and find another person to babble to if you just ignore them and don't give them any response. Walk

away from them if they are physically offensive. Why waste time resorting to violence if it's not necessary.

Whiners and Complainers: People who abuse you as a reliable listening ear for their constant complaining or whining can be taught that their complaints aren't welcome through consistent but polite messages that they should "think positive," "not dwell on the negative" and that you'd like to hear a little more balance from them.

Bullies: People who shove others around, whether "playfully" or otherwise, will seldom respond to subtleties. Sometimes, the best thing to do is to acknowledge their toughness but saying that you don't feel like getting pushed around and you don't want to relate to them in that way, ever! If they insist, you'll eventually have to take some drastic action and you don't want to do that. It's a drag to cause a lot of trouble.

Typically, you have to be pretty assertive with bullies, including avoiding them, taking leave as soon as they get pushy, or, in some instances (the last one), challenging them physically, which may just be calling their bluff, or getting help from an authority figure or a bigger, tougher friend.

Incessant Arguers: To avoid arguments you don't want, stay emotionally detached from the person enticing you into the argument, and simply refuse, persistently, to accept their challenge.

Con Artists and Fast Talkers: Manipulative people, who are constantly trying to get the best advantage in every situation, without regard to principles or the needs of other people, can be referred to as "con artists" or "fast talkers," people trying to get something from you that you don't want to give. With these types, the cold shoulder is typically the only effective way of "getting them off your back."

Stubborn Insisters. People who just won't let up in their attempts to get you to do things their way will by definition seldom be swayed by talk. To combat their efforts, develop a deaf ear and a refusal to be moved.

Moody Types: Don't let moody people draw you into their funk (sadness) or anger. Be sympathetic but persist in the mood you prefer and if they apply pressure to join them in their "downer" mood, tell them "Misery needs company but not mine. Come on, cheer up or I'm going to split. Man, the sun is shining!" or a phrase of this kind.

Guilt Trippers: People who make you guilty in order to get something from you will quit their guilt-tripping when you simply persist in your refusal to let them make you feel guilty.

- *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder:* People are not prettier or more handsome than each other: Judgements of these kind are a matter of opinion only. When "good looks" are viewed in terms of some hypothetical, universal standard, a set of facts, then people are judged according to standards over which they have no control. When beautiful becomes something that is or isn't, it can be used by those "with it" to get unfair advantages.

The DETSCAT Intervention Process in Action

To see the sociocognitive self-management system in action, let's follow a guy named Jack through a difficult situation.

Jack has had a persistent anger problem since he was seven years old. Some of his relatives think he has had it since he was a toddler. Three weeks ago, after attacking his younger brother in school and breaking two of his teeth and giving him a long gash across the face that required forty stitches, Jack was admitted for the first time to a treatment program for children with impulse control problems. Things were going well until several nights ago, when Jack had a horrifying dream in which he was being suffocated by a heavy weight. Other than a half-admission to a counsellor, followed by a sneer and a denial ("I'm just bullshittin', Doc), Jack hasn't told anyone about this dream or the fact that it was recurring and that, often, he feared its onset so much that he avoided sleep. He has never shared the feelings he has about the dream.

After Jack has this dream, he often loses sleep for days and gets very grumpy and difficult to deal with. Often, he lashes out at other children.

Jack's counsellor worked with him for several sessions and, finally, he agreed to try the sociocognitive approach, which he has since been using to learn to deal with the feelings associated with the horrifying dream.

Jack begins by describing in writing (point form) his feelings and behaviour.

Next, he describes the situation as accurately as he can, making the following points:

1. "I have used anger and aggression against other people to cope with my feelings for as long as I can remember."
2. "I tend to get really angry and mean with people after having a nightmare or not sleeping because I'm scared of having the nightmare. Sometimes I hurt people when I get really tired from not sleeping and being afraid of the dream for quite awhile."
3. "I'd like to think about what the dream is about and learn not to get so mad and hurt other people."

With the help of staff, Jack identifies the thoughts he has about situation:

1. "I must be crazy to be acting this way."
2. "I'll never get over the dream."
3. "I can't face the other people after I lose my temper. They'll think I'm either a really mean son of a bitch or I'm like a little kid having tantrums."
4. "I feel like going and slamming somebody or something. I must be crazy."

After careful exploration of the background situation from which the nightmare arose, Jack is in a position to directly confront some of his own, troubling thoughts. The counsellor

works with Jack and, together, they trace the dream to his experience of an angry stepfather who, during a fight with his mother, sat on him and put a pillow over his head when he was just 4 years old, and threatened to smother him. The threat was really directed at Jack's mother, but it so terrified Jack that he had to be placed in psychiatric care for several weeks in order to overcome a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder.

After dealing with the issue for several sessions, Jack is assisted in efforts to dispute some of the troubling thoughts he has that still arise out of the incident. Gradually, he replaces them with more accurate and less upsetting alternatives. He recognizes thoughts 1 to 3 as examples of self-depreciation. There is no evidence that he is either bad or crazy. His behaviour is perfectly understandable, given the pain that he obviously continues to feel about the incident.

Jack wishes that he hadn't lost his temper and expressed his anger in aggressive and violent ways. But he is helped to see how, in lacking effective coping skills, he lacked the ability to protect himself from the psychological discomfort associated with the suffocation memories and, as it turns out, several other traumatic incidents he experienced in his younger years. He is also taught some methods for managing his anger in constructive ways.

The counsellor shows Jack some relaxation techniques to help him sleep and helps him do an imaginative "walk-through" of the dream more than twenty times, each time associating the reconstructed dream with some humour and some recasting of elements of the dream (In one such reconstruction, Jack grabs the pillow and Mom, Jack and his stepfather wind up having a friendly pillow fight and finishing by rolling on the floor and giggling. In another, Jack simply blows and blows and the pillow and the stepfather just fly out the window).

Jack then challenges the thought that he'll "never get over the dream," which is a clear-cut example of awfulizing about the future, by being asked to remember the two weeks of time during counselling that he controlled his anger and during which he did nothing self-destructive or destructive to other people. He was also encouraged by staff to look back at a typical week and, in so doing, he realized that his anger episodes amounted to only a fraction of the entire time spent in any given week of his life. Here is clear-cut evidence that Jack can control his anger and that, while in the program, he has improved on his usual length of time between bouts of impulsive expressions of anger.

Jack then goes on to identifying the situations in which his anger seems to be triggered by other people and the times that other people encourage him to act out his anger in antisocial ways as a part of being "one of the gang." He comes up with the following:

When that big guy in the program sneers at me I feel like he thinks I'm dirt and it makes me real pissed. I want to just pop him. Anyway, I have to sneer back and that creates a tension in the whole group.

After school and on the weekends, I like to hang out with a guy named Sonny who is a year older than me and is pretty popular at the Reserve—and even in the towns around the Reserve. He's good looking and athletic and when you're with him, the girls come at us like flies to honey. But he's always egging me on, starting fights with other guys

and drawing me into it. Or making fun of old people or white people who seem to be afraid of Indians.

THE FACILITATOR SHOULD DISPUTE THESE THOUGHTS, SHOWING THAT NEITHER THE SNEER OF THE 'BIG GUY' NOR THE INFLUENCE OF THE POPULAR FRIEND ('SONNY') MAKE HIM ACT. ULTIMATELY, HE CHOOSES TO REACT TO THE SNEER AND TO GO ALONG WITH SONNY. IN NEITHER CASE IS HE ACTING FROM A PRINCIPLED POSITION WHICH DEMANDS BASED ON HIS OWN CONSCIOUS CHOICES.

IN GROUP, *PRACTISE, PRACTISE AND PRACTISE* BY PROCESSING THE KIDS' OWN EXAMPLES TO GET THEM TO SEE HOW THEY CAN BE IN CHARGE OF THEIR OWN EMOTIONS AND REACTIONS TO CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE UNPLEASANT OR, AT FIRST BLUSH, OVERWHELMING.



EXERCISE 6.3

A MORE SYSTEMATIC PRESENTATION OF SOCIOCOGNITIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

OVERVIEW

In this exercise, a more systematic approach to teaching the sociocognitive problem-solving method is outlined.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide participants with further practise in sociocognitive problem-solving.
2. To distinguish immediate responses from approaches to more generalized thinking and emotional states.

MATERIAL(S) AND EQUIPMENT

Flipchart and marker or blackboard and chalk

TIME

This should be done in three or four 45 minute to 1 hour sessions, as part of the after-school program

A. IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

1. Intervening in Automatic Thought Patterns

Message to Participants: "How we think affects how we feel and how we behave. When we view events as threatening or shameful, we tend to feel defeated, deprived, anxious, exceptionally angry or depressed. Our insides seem to be tied up in knots, which in turn can lead us to withdraw from other people whom, in truth, we really want to be with— or it can lead us to abandoning activities in which we would really like to participate. It can also lead us to lashing out at people and, often, to getting hurt physically or hurt again emotionally— or to hurting others and later regretting it.

"Very often when we make these judgements that tangle our insides and lead to regrettable actions, we aren't 'thinking straight' but, instead, we are distorting reality. Often, we expect the worst (give examples and get examples from the kids) and, guess what, we get it.

"But, we've also all experienced situations where we expect something awful to happen and it doesn't or we read something negative into a situation that isn't there. Consider the following:

Carol often helps Alex with his math in school. The two pass each other in the hallway. Carol smiles and says hello with a broad, friendly smile. Alex doesn't seem to notice her. He strides past quickly, apparently not even noticing Carol. "What a creep" says Carol. "Such a snob. I guess he thinks he's too good for me. I'm good enough to help him with his schoolwork but he can't even acknowledge me.

Along comes Jane, who stops Carol to tell her that Alex just got a call from his mother at the hospital asking him to come immediately because his father had a heart attack and is in the hospital in critical condition.

Carol suddenly realizes why Alex is so distracted and she feels sheepish about jumping to a negative conclusion. She admits to herself; 'Alex is a pretty good friend. He really isn't a snob!'"

"So what's going on here? What does this teach us? Maybe that, if we fool ourselves negatively, we can also fool ourselves positively. For example, coaches often convince the players of pretty untalented teams that they are able to win. The players get pumped up, believing in themselves and their team-mates and, time and time again, they have a far better chance of winning.

"Guess what! We are all capable of consciously using positive thoughts rather than negative thoughts to control our emotion. We've got to learn to break the habit of negative distortion. How? (Note: Give examples and show how to do it—essentially by challenging exaggerated expectations and negative thoughts with alternative ways of thinking about them. Some basic strategies you can use are referred to in the chart below).

Strategies for Overcoming Self-destructive Thinking Patterns

Common types of distorted thinking	Description/Examples of Distorted Thinking	Positive Alternative
1. All-or-nothing thinking: A belief that if you don't have (or can't have) it all, you've got nothing [Also known as black or white, good or bad thinking.]	- If Bob, the most popular teen on the Reserve, doesn't like me, then nobody does. - If Jack doesn't get the baseball glove he wants, then he doesn't want any glove (and he can't afford the one he wants)	Thinking that it is Bob who is losing out by not getting to know a new friend and decides to seek out other friendships Decide to get a reasonably priced glove that is available and concentrate on improving skills rather than the quality of the glove, and meanwhile, look for sales and look for used gloves at garage sales.
2. Overgeneralization: Taking a single event and generalizing it to all events.	- Billy Ironstar, an Assiniboine, was taunted about his cultural background by some Cree teens and some White teens on the first day of school. He told his mother that we wasn't going to attend the school because they were all racists there. - Jane, who is overweight has decided that she won't go to any more dances because nobody danced with her and she overheard a boy describing her to his friend as "pretty porky."	- Recognize that only a few made the comments and give the school situation a chance for at least two more weeks; long enough to get a better sense of the situation. - Consider the fact that it was only one of many boys who made such a comment — and that she could ask people to dance, but she didn't. If weight really is an issue, maybe it should be confronted and dealt with.
3. Catastrophizing: "Making a mountain out of a mole hill" or magnifying the possible consequences of an event.	- "If only I'd have listened to that teacher I'd have passed that test. But I didn't and my whole education is screwed up." - "I missed by bus to camp so the whole summer is messed up, a total loss."	Consider the failure to listen as a delay rather than a permanent limitation. Shift immediately to a practical question: "What are the other ways of getting to the camp?"
4. Negative Comparisons: Always comparing oneself with other people's standards that we can't meet.	Del is depressed that his batting average was the second highest in the league because his older brother was first when he played.	Savor the accomplishment by making personal comparisons with other players in the league.

Common types of distorted thinking	Description/Examples of Distorted Thinking	Positive Alternative
5. Paranoid thinking: The tendency to believe that other people are working against me.	A girl believes that different cliques on the Reserve and in the off-reserve school are always talking about her, laughing at her, and generally motivated to work against her happiness.	Realizing that most people are preoccupied with their own needs and problems and they hardly have the time to secretly organize against one person.
6. Mind Reading: Jumping to the conclusion that people are going to be negative or do something we don't want.	The brother of a teen (Bill), committed suicide and because they often argued and fought, Bill blamed himself for his brother's death.	You can't read other people's minds, so why jump to unprovable conclusions.
7. Personalizing: Assuming that someone is insulting you or threatening you.	- A boy assumes that his alcoholic father left his mother because the boy made it too hard for the parents to live together. - "They didn't like my idea at group today, so I don't think they like me."	Ask a reputable counsellor who will tell you that when parents break up, kids often think that it's their fault but adults manage their own affairs — and they are responsible for kids, not the other way around. Then quit blaming yourself. Think about it. A person's idea is not the person. Last time you rejected someone's idea, did it mean you didn't like them?
8. Should or Ought Thinking: The belief that there is only one right way to do anything	If a person finds that they are unable to do something, say play hockey or golf, then they must be a loser because they believe that <i>everyone should</i> be able to play each game.	Consider all the other people who can't play these games and all the other games that you can play and things you can do.
9. Defensive/Aggressive thinking: The belief that all people interactions are conflicts and that disruptions in life caused by others usually invites a provocation.	If a person has something to do with an event that is aggravated, the person irritated by the event believes the individual is challenging his manhood and he must fight to save face (and maintain respect)	Actually, very rarely do people directly try to upset each other. Why not give the person the benefit of the doubt, assume it wasn't intentional and get on with things.

Common types of distorted thinking	Description/Examples of Distorted Thinking	Positive Alternative
10. Blame-based thinking. Someone else makes us angry, sad, depressed, etc.	The teacher upset me so much that I couldn't do any good on the exam	Who has the primary interest in preparing and passing the exam? Why let the teacher get the best of you. It's your problem. take care of it.

Key Principle to repeat:

Think of alternative ways of viewing disruptive events that you originally thought were caused by unavoidable circumstances or by the attitudes or behaviour of others.

2. Respond to Social Expectations

Author's Advice to Director/facilitator. Say to the kids: "Sometimes we want to just change the way we think about a disruptive event but we remember or we are immediately reminded by those around us what others will think.

"For example, we think our friends will think it's 'wussy' if we don't put up our dukes when it looks like someone has provoked us. So before they're able to see us or hear the slightest little thing about why we hesitated, we start to rumble. So what's wrong with this?

Wait for some answers and then suggest some, e.g.,

1. Maybe our friends don't give two cents about whether we fight or not.
2. Maybe what we think is a provocation — a desire to fight — was *not* the intention of the person you're dealing with at all. Maybe s/he was just fooling around, doing some friendly, if a little aggressive, teasing, or maybe something entirely different was intended, but something that was positive.
3. Maybe the person was trying to provoke you. If s/he does and you respond, who's in control? Who has the power? You or him/her?
4. Maybe the person was trying to provoke you because s/he had just been hurt by something at home or something other kids had done. It might be valuable for you to reconsider the challenge and convert it into something positive. Say, 'Ah hell what's bugging you, I don't want to fight.'
5. What about principles? Wouldn't it make sense to decide that it is not what other people think that should govern what we do, but what we believe we should do.

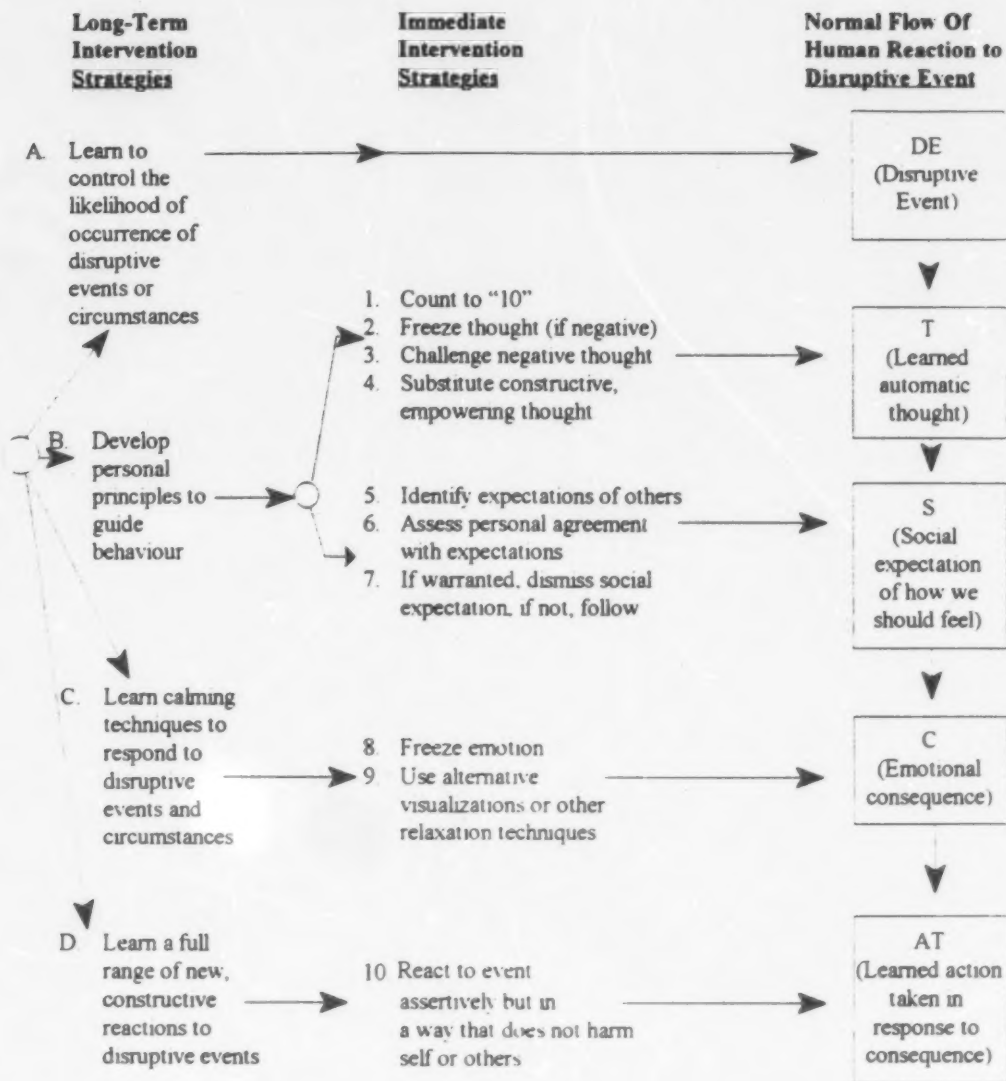
Run through various personal examples with the kids . . .

Statement to Participants: "You probably still have the feelings originating in your reaction to the disruptive event, so what can you do about the feeling?"

"First, *get in touch with the feeling*. How does it effect you physically? You're tense. Maybe you've got butterflies in your stomach. You might be seating a little more than you usually do.

"Now, think of something calming, like a beautiful sky, or sympathetic old grandmother's face, or a piece of soft music . . . or just your favourite colours.

Once you've relaxed, think of what you might do. e.g., see steps above.



B. LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Program Directors should develop a number of their own examples of how to change attitudes and behaviours that impact on the entire life circumstances of the adolescents. As our diagram above suggests, there are three general strategies that can be adopted to overcome learned, dysfunctional reactions.

a. Learning to Control the Likelihood of Disruptive Events (Some Examples)

Potentially Adverse Circumstance	Typical, Dysfunctional Reaction	More Positive, Alternative Reactions
Exposure to criminal and dangerous activities through hanging out with a friend attracted to a gang	Going along with the gang, and submitting to their pressure to conform	Hanging out with the close friend from the group, but not when he or she is involved with the gang.
Dealing with a belligerent, drunken stepfather or common law companion of your mother	Deliberately provoking the stepfather and suffering the consequences or Running away from home and hiding out on the street	Contacting a human service worker (like a child welfare worker or the Vision Seekers Director) and sharing your situation—and insisting on having a say in the terms attached to living in circumstances protected by the child welfare authorities

Potentially Adverse Circumstance	Typical, Dysfunctional Reaction	More Positive, Alternative Reactions
etc. (GIVE EXAMPLES & GET BOTH "TYPICAL" COUNTERPRODUCTIVE REACTIONS & MORE POSITIVE REACTIONS FROM KIDS)	etc.	etc.

b. Developing Principles to Guide Behaviour

Facilitate a discussion about principles and values. You might utilize the following sources for leading a discussion of values and principles:

1. Principles drawn from the sayings of Traditional Elders or Traditional Aboriginal beliefs.
2. The Ten Commandments
3. The (seven) habits of highly effective people—as detailed in the book of the same name by Steven Covey.

c. Learning a Full Range of Alternative Reactions to Provocative People

Potentially Adverse Circumstances	Typical, Dysfunctional Reaction	Positive, Alternative Reaction
Being goaded into joining a delinquent gang by a very influential person, thus confronting a high probability of being convicted of crime(s)	Yielding to the pressure and joining, eventually being convicted of crime(s)	Choosing not to join and, consequently seeing yourself as a person who makes up his own mind, a "loner" if necessary, who does exactly what he decides to do, not what others try to tell him because you are afraid
A teacher needles you, apparently singling you out	Letting the teacher upset you and refusing to perform at the expected academic standard in the teacher's class—and thus getting a low grade, etc. ...	Learn to respond to the needling with gentle humour; train yourself <i>not</i> to let your reactions to the teacher overcome your ability to perform academically (If s/he won't let up, see if you can change classes)
Your own and/or kids examples:	Your own &/or kids examples:	Your own &/or kids examples:

STAGE 7

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY DYNAMICS

Troubled youth often come from families characterized by internal social dynamics which actually reinforce their troubled thoughts and behaviours; often, the family is the primary source of their problems. Troubled kids in troubled families must often deal with guilt because they are convinced that they are personally responsible for many of the problems facing their parents. The Vision Seekers program should make every effort within its means to enlist the parents (or guardian[s]) of the participants in individual and group counselling (and, in appropriate situations, also the siblings), if the need is obvious. However, often parents and other siblings will simply not participate. Further, many parents engage in behaviours that actually undermine the goal-seeking process embarked on by the participant. Consequently, youth from troubled families can benefit from insight into family dynamics. They can learn that problems are 'systemic' rather than caused by any one person. Vision Seekers can also learn to have empathy with their parents, however imperfect they may be. And the youth participating in the program must also learn that they cannot be held to blame for the fundamental problems that only their parents can solve.

Important Considerations:

1. This can be a fairly difficult set of exercises for the kids. You might want to have a 'recreational pause' between Stage 6 and Stage 7 so you don't make the program seem like an intensive mental health therapy program, with constant therapeutic activity going on.
 2. The delicacy and complexity of the facilitator's role would suggest that an experienced social group worker, family therapist or counsellor should act as facilitator for these exercises.
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EXERCISE 7.1

AN EXPLORATION OF FAMILY SYSTEMS

OVERVIEW

This exercise allows participating adolescents an opportunity to think about what an ideal family might be like and how each of them, personally, would like to establish a functioning family of their own in the future. It sets the stage for their more in-depth examination of family systems. The exercise also allows the Director/Group Worker and the Counselor an opportunity to gain insights into the hopes and aspirations of the participants, setting the stage for a more focused exploration of the actual family dynamics and problems being faced by participants in their families.

OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage the personal development of participants by facilitating their consideration of an idealized family.
2. To provide the Program Director and Counselor with insights into the family realities and aspirations of participants.
3. To initiate a group process that will encourage participants to play a more constructive role in their own families and to seek help when dysfunctional family dynamics are placing them at emotional or physical risk.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Pencils and notepaper for participants

Flipchart & flipchart pad (or blackboard) and felt pens (or chalk)

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Space for the open group to meet.

Desks or tables for participants to write on

TIME REQUIRED

45 minutes to 1.5 hrs.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

Introduce the subject of the family by briefly talking about its importance. Simply identifying some of its functions should be sufficient, e.g.,

- ☐ Making sure that society reproduces itself biologically (a society could not survive if it didn't have new recruits every generation)
- ☐ Feeding, sheltering and completely caring for babies until they have some capacity for independence.
- ☐ Stimulating young children so that they develop the capacity to learn.
- ☐ Teaching basic life skills to children.
- ☐ Teaching children about their own cultural heritage.
- ☐ Supervising and otherwise protecting children.
- ☐ Disciplining children.
- ☐ Preparing children for dealing with society (relationships with extended family, friends, school, work, etc)

Hand out pens/pencils and notepaper and ask each participant to write down some notes describing his/her thoughts about what the ideal family is like. S/he could make reference to his/her own family, another family s/he knows about, a family in a movie or on T.V. S/he could think about the things she would most like to see, such as kindness in the relations between mom and dad and fair and loving treatment of children. S/he could talk about feelings: happiness; playfulness; openness; honesty; a set of parents who you could rely on and take your troubles to.

After two to four minutes, ask participants to reconvene in the circle. Then field a discussion of what constitutes a good, healthy family, the type of family they would like to be from and the type of family they would like to establish if they had an opportunity. Make suggestions as required. Write the characteristics on the flipchart or chalkboard, identifying each contribution with the person who is suggesting the characteristic.

When everything is down, go through the characteristics and try to summarize what an ideal family would look like, according to the Vision Seekers' group. Discuss each point and don't be afraid to suggest characteristics that they might have missed, but let them determine the final outcome.

EXERCISE 7.2

FAMILY SCULPTING

OVERVIEW

This exercise is used to demonstrate family dynamics by arranging family members in a "sculpture," as well as to show participants that they can have an impact on the family system—and that they can seek help if the system is so dysfunctional that it is placing them at risk. It can be used with the participant's family (if they are agreeable) by the Director, if s/he is a trained family therapist or group worker, or by the Counsellor/Therapist. It can also be used as an educational device to assist the participants and the group to gain insights about the family reality and personal needs of the participant. The exercise should only be undertaken if a trained group worker or therapist is part of the process.

OBJECTIVES

1. To illustrate and demonstrate family dynamics in a way that allows participants to better understand their own behaviour in relation to their families and to better understand how families as whole systems of interaction operate.
2. The exercise also allows participants to identify ways of changing unsatisfactory relationships by altering the sculpture (i.e., the existing [or perceived existing] pattern of family relations).
3. The exercise offers opportunities for young adolescents to use the support of the group to confront losses, such as a deceased sibling, a divorced parent separated from the family, or the loss of their role of the "favourite child" after the birth of a younger sibling who has replaced the child as the centre of family attention with the support of the group.

MATERIALS

None.

SPACE

A room large enough for the group or, when weather permits, an outdoor setting offering a variety of props such as picnic tables and benches, playground equipment, etc.

METHOD

In this exercise, each group member is a sculptor as well as a viewer of the sculpture. When it is the Vision Seekers' group rather than the family that is involved in the exercise, the sculptor creates his or her family as a living sculpture by choosing other group members to represent family members. S/he arranges them in the room so as to symbolize family dynamics.

The choice of persons to play roles should depend on such things as size and personality rather than any rigid expectations of group members really looking like group members. For example, a boy might actually choose a girl to be his father. Ultimately, the children should decide and the participants must listen to the sculptor describe the relationships and gestures they should act out.

Ideally the sculptor would choose someone to stand in the sculpt for him- or herself. This could happen in sessions with the Program Counselor and the family, of course, but the exercise can also be involved as a specific segment of the regular after-school sessions. If the session is a special one with a single family alone, the sculptor stands in as him- or herself.

After the sculpture is complete, the sculptor interprets his or her work, explaining why family members are positioned as they are.

The Facilitator(s) then invites the sculptor to rearrange the sculpt by making it as he or she wishes it were.

At some point, all participants willing to explore their own family's relationships and dynamics should have a chance to be the sculptor.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

The group worker/facilitator tells the group members that in these sessions each of them will have a chance to be the sculptor.

What is a sculptor?

It is a person who shapes materials into a representation of something interesting to make people think.

Explain that, over a series of sessions, each of the participating Vision Seekers will create a living sculpture of his or her family by selecting peers to stand in for family members. Each sculptor will place these family members in the room so that family relationships are expressed.

Provide examples. Power and control can be expressed by placing powerful family members above less powerful ones. If Mom has the power, she could be asked to stand on a chair or table, perhaps higher than dad. Sometimes facilitators will discover that adolescents are aware that they themselves have the power when they step up on a table [sometimes with a knowing grin!] A family member (actual or another Vision Seeker) sitting bowed on the floor or lying

on the floor portrays submission or powerlessness. Close or not-so-close relationships can be illustrated by family members' proximity to one another. If a stepfather or older brother is across the room in the corner with his back to the rest of the family, we know he is not too close to them. However, if he is sitting on Mom's lap, we have another picture.

If the children have difficulty conceptualizing how to sculpt, a facilitator might do a sculpture from her/his own family, showing various examples of how to depict relationships in an understandable and meaningful way.

Typically adolescents don't need more than an example or two; they are eager to get started.

Help the sculptor by asking whether the sculptor can help the group know more about how Mom and Dad. For example: Are they—Really close? Angry? Bored? Distant? Best Friends? They can have arms around each other to indicate closeness in the family, hold hands if they're best friends; stand with their backs to each other or in a fighting stance confronting each other if they're at odds most of the time; or be placed with one above the other if power or control typifies their relationship.

The sculptor can be a part of the sculpt as well or can occupy different roles, substituting him or herself for group members representing different family roles in order to describe his/her perceptions of attitudes. It's best to have the sculptor choose someone else to stand in for him or her. That way the sculptor can observe the complete family from a distance and perhaps more objectively. If group size makes that tactic impossible, have the sculptor stand in for him- or herself.

Numbers of family members often become an issue. Members will ask how many of their family members to include. Inclusion can be a problem when members have very large nuclear families, or in cases where extended family are considered as close as the nuclear family as in blended families. You can only work with what you've got. If the teen who is sculpting has 13 family members and the group size is 9, have the sculptor pick the 9 family members who have the most impact on him or her (and there's nothing wrong with the leader taking part). Some friendly persuasion and gentle humour may be required to convince one member to play the role of another. For members who have little influence on the sculptor, you can use an inanimate object like a chair.

When the sculpture is completed ask the sculptor to describe his family dynamics by explaining his sculpture. The Facilitator should then,

- Ask questions to further clarify the youth's description and encourage more focus and more precision in the explanation.
- Make interpretive suggestions.
- Gently challenge some of the observations.
- Ask the child how he feels about the overall dynamics and specific relationships between family members and him/herself and each other.
- Explore what changes the child (sculptor) would like to make and offer suggestions to

how that might take place.

- Carefully explore any issues that appear to require intervention but only do so in a fashion that allows the child to speak to the therapist or group leader in private after the session. For example, if a child breaks down emotionally in discussing his relationship with a domineering stepfather, then suggest talking to the child after the session.

This exercise allows the facilitators/therapists and the group to "enter" the perceptions of the sculptor and to offer alternative perspectives. There is probably not enough time to have group interaction, so don't encourage it. You'll probably need from 3 to 4 sessions to work through the sculpting process for all participants. They don't have to be back-to-back but they should probably all take place within a two week period.

After a group discussion of the sculpture, the sculptor should be invited to rearrange the sculpt as he or she wishes it were. A discussion of the results should follow. At this time magical thinking can be discovered and confronted. For example, it is very common for children of divorce to re-create their family of origin as intact, as it was before the parent split up. You can ask gently whether this is a possibility. When the sculptor says no, then ask what is possible. The possibility must involve some movement of the sculptor him- or herself. Mom and Dad may never be close again, but the sculptor may see that he or she can move close to each of them, but separately. Emphasize that people have control over only their own behavior. We cannot determine the decisions and behavior of others.

In this exercise, summarizing the events is unnecessary. Conclusions and suggestions come naturally as part of each member's work.

This exercise may be the most powerful one of all the exercises: In it, the mind, the body, the visual, movement, position, and contact—combine to inform understanding of family dynamics. The children suddenly will see what really is going on in the family through their own effort to reproduce the basic dynamics of the family system.

In cases where the family is extremely dysfunctional and nothing the sculptor did could affect the system, identify the teen as a survivor and value his or her coping skills. Coping skills may include exploring protective care by the Indian Child and Family Service Agency (or a provincial, territorial, or state child welfare authority) or conditional custody with active social work support. In cases where things look really hopeless, ask the teenagers to sculpt the families they hope to have when they grow up and have their own families. This may create the hope necessary for the child to take the action necessary to get help or to signal to the Vision Seekers' staff that s/he is willing to utilize their support when they seek help.

NOTE: The methods gained from the practice of family sculpting can be derived for application to group sculpting. These tools serve as an excellent means of analyzing Vision Seekers' group dynamics and of finding solutions to any outstanding problems.

EXERCISE 7.3

SURVIVAL ROLES IN A FAMILY - LEARNING THROUGH A PSYCHODRAMA

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Participants will identify the role they play in their families through participation in a structured psychodrama.

The exercise also attempts to enhance participants awareness of their family as a system and some of the positive and negative aspects of the dynamics of their own family system and the impact of both on the social and psychological aspects of their selves.

MATERIALS

None

METHOD

The Facilitator should give a brief, summarized description of the survival roles that often characterize dysfunctional families. If the Program Director is uncomfortable with facilitating this exercise, it might be useful to engage the services of the Counsellor involved. The leader directs a structured psychodrama using him/herself, a Co-facilitator and volunteers from the program to portray a dysfunctional family. Processing occurs when psychodrama participants discuss their roles in the play and their roles in their own families.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

Give the group an explanation of the survival roles that emerge in dysfunctional families. Explain that researchers learned about these patterns when they began studying alcoholics and the families of people with alcoholic dependency problems. It was surprising to learn how similar these families are. It seems that family members respond to the alcoholism of a parent in very predictable ways. People in alcoholic families believe that they must think, feel, and behave in certain ways in order to survive. These patterns cluster into what have been called "survival roles." Then we learned that alcoholism was not the only thing that spawned these patterns. Other problems produced the same dynamics. If the problem wasn't Mom's or Dad's drinking problem, maybe it was Dad's gambling, or Mom's addiction to a prescription drug, or Dad's affairs, or Mom's depression, or Dad's temper and violence. Families

organize around these "conditions" in similar patterns. To illustrate these patterns, the group is going to do a skit.

Explain that you will need most members for parts. Also explain that it isn't hard. Everyone has only one line to say.

First, with the "elbow grease" of the Vision Seekers, have all of the furniture moved to the walls of the room.

Next, ask someone to be Mom, who is a single parent with a boyfriend who is now staying at home. For the purposes of this skit, Mom is an alcoholic. Mom's boyfriend is a man who says he loves her — and often seems to when he is sober or not in a very angry mood — but is occasionally violent with her when she's drunk. Occasionally, he drinks with her, but generally is a far more sober individual. He is fairly cold emotionally with the kids but he does show enough responsibility to try to make sure they get to school and back on time and that they get regular meals.

Ask and encourage members to volunteer for parts. Tell the group that if they don't choose, you (the facilitator) will have to choose and they may not like the role they get. With patience, volunteers usually fill all the roles.

Once you have the individual playing Mom, ask her to stand with you in the centre of the room. Explain that Mom has been a problem drinker for several years and that her drinking has been getting worse every year. Mom's line in the skit is, "I really could use a drink. Damn, I've got to have a drink!"

Now ask for a volunteer to be Mom's boyfriend. The boyfriend joins Mom in the middle of the room. Say that the boyfriend seems to deny that Mom's alcohol problem is very severe. Allowing himself to accept the seriousness of Mom's alcohol abuse is too frightening because his own wife and he used to have alcohol dependency problems and she was killed in a car accident when a friend was driving them both home from a dance at another reserve. The boyfriend simply can't face the reality of the potential loss of another partner if he confronted her about her alcohol problem and she jilted him and furthermore he simply doesn't want to think about the problem itself after all he has gone through.

When the kids tell the boyfriend that their mother has a bad alcohol problem, his line is, "Everything's fine. There's no problem here." To depict the boyfriend's lack of emotional strength, ask him to stand behind Mom and to place his hands on Mom's shoulders.

Next choose the first-born child (male or female, it doesn't matter). Have this child stand next to Mother. This child comes to believe that if he or she is just good enough, the family will be okay. This child is called the Family Hero and is an overachiever in almost everything. He or she is probably a good student and is well liked by the teachers at school. A good athlete, this child is also something of a leader at school.

The Family Hero is dependable and responsible.

The family Hero's general approach to Mom's drinking is summed up in the line is, "Don't

worry, Mom. You can lean on me."

Have the Family Hero and Mom link arms.

The second-born child is the Rebel/Scapegoat. When this child comes along, the space for being good is all filled up by the family Hero. The second child believes that he or she can never be as good as the Hero and so finds an identity in being bad. The Rebel's job is to go against family values. The Rebel does poorly in school, chooses the "wrong crowd" as friends, may have trouble with the law, is likely to abuse alcohol and other drugs, and generally stirs up trouble wherever he or she goes. Sooner or later, everything bad that happens in the family is blamed on the Rebel/Scapegoat. Actually this child understands more clearly than anyone else what's going on in the family.

The Rebel doesn't like the boyfriend because he thinks he encourages Mom to drink rather than standing up to the problem. He unconsciously hopes he will shake Mom out of her drinking problem by joining with the other family members in trying to rescue him from his trouble at school, with community leaders and even with the police.

The Rebel's part is to run in a circle around Dad, Mom, and the Hero, shaking a fist and saying, "I hate you guys. I'm going to make you all go nuts trying to figure out what I'm up to over the next while!"

The Rebel is the child most likely to have substance abuse problems and/or to wind up in a treatment program for acting-out behavior.

Have the Rebel/Scapegoat stand away from the central group, looking disgusted and angry.

The third child in this family finds the situation quite chaotic as he or she grows up. Mom is always gone or drinking or drunk and yelling at the kids or the boyfriend or sleeping it off, leaving the kids to their own devices. The boyfriend is pretending nothing's the matter while the hero is busy being perfect and the Rebel is constantly in trouble. With all the other standard role space crowded, the third child survives by becoming invisible. Researchers call her the Lost Child. This child is typically in the basement or the bedroom reading or plugged into a the stereo headphones.

At school, the Lost Child sits at the back of the classroom and never raises her hand. It's the child who feels alone in the company of others. Being alone means feeling safe, but it also means feeling lonely. This is the child most likely to be depressed and to attempt suicide at some point.

The person playing the lost child should be curled up with a book, situated some distance from the group. This child has no line to say.

There is also a fourth child, who can be referred to as the Sick Child. This child learns that the only safe way to get his or her dependency needs met is through being sick. This child may be the saddest one of all—only feeling worthy when ill. The Sick Child sits on the floor. He or she recites this line while bending over and holding the stomach: "I think I'm going to be sick!"

The baby of the family is referred to as the Mascot. This youngest child receives attention and affection for his or her childish antics and behaviours. The family can gather around this little "spot of sunshine," who distracts them from more serious concerns. The Mascot skips around the family members, pulling on their sleeves or skirts and begs, "Won't you come play with me?" In general, rather than being taken seriously, s/he is treated as a source of relief and treated in a simplistic way as a pure and innocent creature lacking the full complexity that is truly human. In short, s/he is treated as the family pet.

The last member of this family is optional. If you have enough group members, use her. She's the Defensive Grandmother, Mom's mother. She only comes to visit sometimes, often to babysit but she doesn't like the boyfriend much and he isn't crazy about her, so she isn't around as often as Grandmothers in First Nations and Inuit communities often are. She stands on a chair and yells at Mom, "It's all your fault!"

You now have all of the players, and they know their parts.

Have each one recite his or her line to be sure each remembers it. Then explain that, in this drama, everyone says his or her line, first one after the other, then at the same time. Remind those characters who have an action (the Rebel, who runs around; the Sick Child, who sits moping; the Mascot, who skips around; and the Mother-in-law, who points her finger) what they're supposed to do.

Expect some uneasiness and resistance as you explain this exercise and the group realizes you want them to take parts in a play. Silliness and giggles or sullen withdrawal actions can be anticipated at first. Most adolescents are torn by the desire to be the centre of attention and a fear that if they get it they might be horrendously embarrassed. Don't despair. Proceed with a positive, confident posture. By modeling enthusiasm and the encouraging spirit of adventure, the group will probably respond favorably.

When selecting players for the various roles, it is helpful to assign members to roles you suspect they play in their families. If you have a Rebel in the group, he or she is probably the Rebel in the family. A quiet, shy member who seldom interacts may well be the Lost Child, the giggly one the Mascot and so on. The exercise is even more powerful when the person with a part mimics his/her real-life role.

Be prepared for almost any reaction to this powerful exercise. Tears, anger, and "a-ha" experiences often are elicited as teenagers recognize their own families or themselves.

Support staff may become crucial. A member's individual therapist may need to be alerted to follow up in processing emotions.

When this activity in schools, school counselors should be notified when a participant seems to need more support. You may need to be available after group for one or two members. It is wise to arrange your time so that your additional counsel is available if needed.

Family roles

Members in a shame-based/dysfunctional family often adjust to the stress in the family in different ways. These ways of adjusting have been described by Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse (1981).*

Following is Wegscheider-Cruse's description of a chemically dependent family, which applies to any dysfunctional family:

1. *Family Hero*: This role involves being sensitive and caring. Feeling responsible for the pain of the family, the Hero tries to improve the dysfunctional family dynamics. The Family Hero strives for success, but because the family doesn't change, he or she ultimately feels like a failure.
2. *Scapegoat*: Opposite of the family hero but ultimately seeking the same thing, s/he tries to gain recognition by pulling away in a destructive manner, bringing negative attention to self by getting into trouble, getting hurt, or just withdrawing. (NOTE: Any attention is better than being ignored.)
3. *Lost Child*: This child provides relief for the family by taking care of his or her own problems and avoiding trouble. The family ignores the child. This inattention results in loneliness and personal suffering.
4. *Sick Child*: The sick child finds acceptance and attention in being ill, which is the only path available for strokes.
5. *Mascot*: Provides relief and humor for the family by being charming and funny during stressful times. This humor does not help the Mascot deal with personal pain and loneliness.

Now it's time to start. Instruct the players to begin saying their lines and performing their actions when you say, "Go!" Tell them to repeat the lines and actions over and over until you say, "Stop!" Count to three and proclaim, "Go!" Yell "Stop!" when it's clear they have the idea.

Usually the first run-through is tentative and less than enthusiastic. At this point, react like any good director and motivate your cast with encouragement and admonitions. Challenge them to really get into their characters and to feel what those characters feel. Again begin the drama. Stop it after several cycles and have the group sit down right where they are.

To process this psychodrama, each character is given a chance to talk about his or her experience. Ask each one, starting with Mom, what it felt like to play that person. You'll be amazed at how accurately the feelings behind the survival roles will be expressed. A common exchange will sound something like this:

* See Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse and Joseph Cruse, M.D., *Understanding Co-dependency*. Health Communications Inc., Deerfield Beach, Florida.

Leader: "What was it like for you to be Mom in this family?"

Mom: "I don't know (pause). It felt like I didn't have any control over anything, not me or my family."

Leader: "How did not having control make you feel?"

Mom: "Lousy! Everyone knows Moms are supposed to sort of be in charge of the household, especially when the real father isn't around and Grandma only comes to visit sometimes. I think I felt like a failure as a woman and a mother."

Proceed in this manner until you get to the Lost Child. Skip that character as if you forgot him or her and go on to the Mascot. At some point, the group will remind you that you skipped the Lost Child. Admit that you did and that that's what happens to the Lost Child in families: They get forgotten and left out! Then process the experience with the Lost Child.

Characteristics of the family roles are provided for the leaders in "Family Roles." This is a useful tool to have nearby so that you don't forget an important point.

CONCLUSION

The Facilitator should ask group members if they see anything of themselves and their families in this psychodrama. You might start by going around the circle.

Questions such as the following usually rise:

Member: "Can you be in one role for a while then switch to another?" (Yes, of course! When there's just one child, that child can assume all these survival roles. They can also change as time goes on and children grow and change).

Leader: "Did that happen in your family?"

Member: "My brother was the Hero, and I was the Rebel. But when he moved out of the house and went to the city, I think I sort of moved to the Hero position. Is that possible?"

Leader: "Yes. It's probably because you believed you had "room" to fill that new empty space. Also, maybe you knew, somehow, that your family needed you to be the Hero now."

Member: "I think I've moved in and out of more than one role. What does that mean?"

Leader: "Tell us about how your family changed. You may have moved into another role because something changed."

Member: "In my family the Lost Child is the oldest. Why is that?"

Leader: "Tell us about your family."

NOTE: The leader should have a working knowledge of survival roles and the basics of the adult children of alcoholics concepts.

FOLLOW-UP SESSION

At a follow-up session, participants should be told how to seek help if they are feeling overwhelmed by family pressures or if they are experiencing neglect or abuse (*Note*: A protocol with an Indian Child and Family Service agency (or other relevant child welfare agency) should be in place to facilitate a smooth referral process that minimizes disruption for the program.

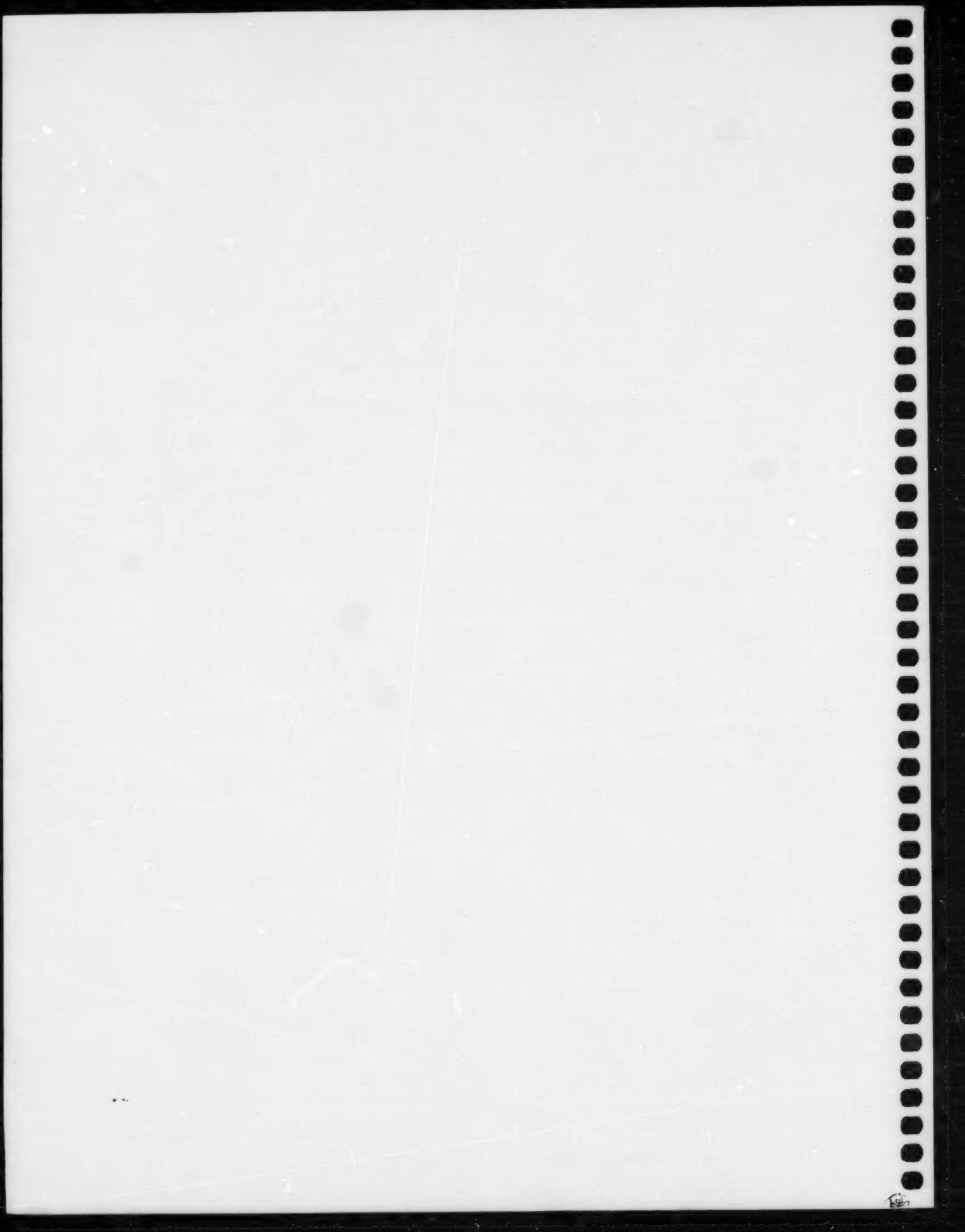
STAGE 8

MANAGING ANGER IN A HEALTHY WAY

Troubled youth are almost characteristically very angry — at themselves, their parents, their siblings, those peers they regard as enemies, at adults in general, and, yes, even at the world in general.

All too often, those youth have not been taught the thinking and social skills that can help them control their anger, channel it in creative and constructive ways, and even overcome its seemingly ironclad hold on them. The exercises in Stage 8 of the program are dedicated to assisting Vision Seekers with their learning of valuable anger management skills.

The especially large number of exercises devoted to anger management are included because of the seriousness and persistence of the problem among Native youth.



EXERCISE 8.1

UNDERSTANDING ANGER

OVERVIEW

This series of exercises is intended to assist participants to recognize anger as a legitimate, natural, emotional impulse that can be discharged in positive or negative ways. The styles of discharging anger are learned and, if those styles are counterproductive, new, more constructive styles of expression can be learned—and, hopefully, through Vision Seekers, those more constructive styles will be learned. For those carrying the burden of a generalized, persistent sense of anger as a predominant emotion, it is hoped that, with the help of such learned skills, that burden can be shed.

PURPOSE

This exercise sets out to describe anger; it suggests that, ultimately, anger is necessary, but that some forms of expressing anger are counterproductive.

The exercise also facilitates the self-exploration of anger and its expression by participants.

The exercise concludes by suggesting and attempting to show participants that there are "smart" ways of expressing anger and "dumb" ways of expressing anger.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assist participants with their own attempts to develop a clear sense of what anger is.
2. To assist participants in their attempts to understand those things that most anger them.
3. To explore with participants whether or not anger is a dominating theme in their life, either as repressed anger or frequently expressed, antisocial behavioural expressions of anger.
4. To show learners that there are ways to overcome anger.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

None

SPACE REQUIRED

The normal, after-school program space and, if space is available, several ante-rooms for privacy during rehearsal of the play.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

Deliver a lecturette that gives some background to the concept of anger and how it is expressed.

Lecturette

Anger is a dangerous and troubling emotion. It can be uncomfortable to feel and a challenge to control.

Most of us find anger frightening; often we find it confusing. It is something we all want to express in intensive ways but we are also apprehensive, afraid it might get out of control, leading to someone getting hurt or getting us into very serious trouble.

We are also often afraid of other people's anger and, in some cases, we wish someone we know actually would express his or her anger because they seem to hold it all in.

We all know that we will at times get angry. It is part of our makeup. So what is the best way to be angry? Let's face it, some people find anger a burden and their anger is expressed in a way that gets them in trouble. Others express their anger in ways that simply seems to get them what they are after.

The anger of some people seems to be out of balance; it consumes them, preoccupying them so constantly that they live in a kind of constant frustration and pain. So we must ask ourselves, what is the best way to be angry?

Are there ways to manage the emotion that can serve our purposes without causing further distress?

Going without the emotion (feeling) of anger is probably not possible. If we don't use our own anger in some way, others will use it against us. If allowed to, others will use it to beat us into submission, thereby forcing us to become potential or actual losers. Unless we are willing to let people do this to us, we must be willing to resist. This means that we must sometimes be prepared to meet force with counterforce. By actually doing this, we are telling our adversaries (enemies) that they are going to experience a fight if they try to take advantage of us or if they try to treat us like an object to attack as an expression of their manipulations or their

own anger. So showing our anger might prevent them from attacking us or it might at least weaken the way they attack or otherwise try to bother us.

Anger also allows us to fight for what we need. It gives us energy when we make efforts to fight for our rights or for our necessities.

So what exactly is anger. In this writer's view, anger is actually a functional emotion; it has a purpose. That is to say that anger potentially achieves something for higher animals, including humans.

Anger's most important function is that it helps to enable us to overcome frustrations. We "vent," "let off steam," in order that we don't "blow up." And let's face it, it's better to let off steam than to have the tractor, train or boat driven by a steam engine blow up.

There are several types of anger that pose problems for us, however; they include:

- ☐ *out-of control anger which, in its greatest intensity, is best referred to as rage.*
- ☐ *over-controlled anger*
- ☐ *ineffectual anger.*

There is obviously also the type of anger that works for us, of course. I'll call that:

- ☐ **ASSERTIVELY MANAGED ANGER!**

Out-of-Control Anger

Out of control anger is the type of anger that seems to have a life of its own. It is fuelled by our suspicions and fantasies about other people or circumstances conspiring against us. It is irrational and it seems to overtake us and blind us, not allowing us to see that it hurts other people. By hurting other people, it usually comes back to hurt us and haunt us. The phrase, "What goes around comes around!" is a befitting prediction for the eventual, if not immediate, outcome of out-of-control anger.

Over-controlled Anger

This type of anger specializes in holding back feelings and guilt. Rather than allowing those who experience it to express their true feelings, it demands that they bottle it up. This is the quiet anger, the anger born by people who direct their feelings inwards and who suffer silently, eventually doing themselves great harm by submitting to the will of others and thus routinely shaming themselves or getting depressed, full of self-hatred, and even, potentially, suicidal.

Ineffectual Anger

Ineffectual anger is the anger of the person who sputters, huffs and puffs, whines and complains, irritating other people and losing their respect by not achieving the goals of their anger. Such a person loses the sense with other people that her/his anger is to be taken seriously.

Assertively-managed Anger: Anger that Meets our Needs

Some anger works wonderfully well for us; in other words, it truly meets our needs by helping us overcome our frustration. We call thus assertively managed anger. What the phrase refers to is being forthright and direct, although not rude or offensive, in expressing our complaints and specifying what and how we want things changed, either now or in the future. In short, assertively-managed anger is anger calculated to achieve our ends, which involve some attempt to overcome our frustrations.

Assertiveness as an anger management stance not only works best in specific situations, if learned and incorporated into the way we handle our social relationships, it helps us overcome our sense that our anger is either out of control or, conversely, our sense that our anger must be hidden or repressed or simply directed against ourselves. It also gives us a sense of self-control and pride that we stand up for ourselves and others.

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2. Next, talk about and exemplify the different types of anger, giving examples from your own (i.e., the facilitator's) own background, then ask Vision Seekers for their examples.
 3. Ask participants to divide into groups of 3 or 4 and to prepare a short play or different examples of each type of expression of anger. The facilitator should go from group to group, helping them develop the play. The ones who are having difficulty might benefit from some more "active assistance" with the writing of the script.
 4. Have the participants act out the plays before the larger group (*Note: You might want to invite the Program Counselor and some of the Mentors when these are performed just to stimulate the sense that the plays are a bit special*). Ask questions to get clarification and encourage other participants to get clarification regarding what is:
 - ☐ *out-of control anger*
 - ☐ *over-controlled anger*
 - ☐ *ineffectual anger*
 - ☐ *assertively managed anger*

EXERCISE 8.2

SELF-EXPLORATION OF ANGER

OVERVIEW

This exercise shifts the focus from a general exploration of anger to the individual participants.

OBJECTIVES

1. To guide participants through a process of recollection to help them determine how often they are affected by anger.
2. To assist participants in recognizing the type of anger they tend to experience and how often it causes them additional problems.
3. To encourage on the part of Vision Seekers a commitment to learning personal coping strategies designed to overcome their anger.

SPACE REQUIRED

Regular after-school program space

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Pencils and sheets of paper

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

1. Tell participants that this exercise will involve how much a problem anger is for them. Tell them they are going to be asked some questions to help figure this out.
2. Ask participants the following questions:
 - *Is anger much of a problem for you? Consider yesterday: 'How often did you feel angry?' 'What about the past week?'*
 - *Would you say that you are (a) angry most of the time (b) angry a lot of the time (c) angry occasionally (d) angry almost never?*
 - *In terms of the styles reflected in the plays in Exercise 8.1, how would you*

characterize your anger?

- *What problems do you experience when you get angry?*
- *Would you like to learn strategies to overcome anger?*

3. Have participants use a pencil and paper to take brief notes in response to those questions, then, if they want they can place the note paper in their pockets or hang on to it in their hands for reference.
4. Next, convene the larger circle and solicit self-descriptions of anger patterns from each participant and discuss the descriptions— asking them if they would like to change the way they deal with their anger.
5. Then say, "In preparation for next day's session, I want you to identify those memories of things that hurt you and that you would like to rid from your memory or to set aside as a source of bitterness forever." Tell them to deal with those things that are most painful. Add that they will have to trust the group to support them in their efforts to express themselves. Allow participants some time to spend taking notes at the end of this session and at the beginning of the next session.

EXERCISE 8.3

DISCARDING 'JUNK' MEMORIES

OVERVIEW

Ritual played an important role in traditional aboriginal societies and it has been demonstrated as an important and effective element in healing and therapeutic processes. This exercise creates a symbolic means of identifying difficult and painful memories and experiencing catharsis by symbolically destroying them in written form.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assist participants in identifying the things in their life that are most disturbing to them, including traumatic events related to accidents, losses of important people, and hurt and shame associated with being victimized by physical or sexual abuse or being a perpetrator of harm to others.
2. To help participants share difficult past experiences with the group and group leaders in order to sort out those things that can be (a) examined, analysed and better understood (b) categorized as experiences needing (i) extensive analysis with a counselor and, perhaps, with the group or (ii) set aside as something that must be recognized as having had an impact on one's life but not being worthy of continued anxiety or concern.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

A room large enough to accommodate the entire group, to allow pairs to work separately, without distraction, as well as desk settings allowing individuals to write notes in privacy.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Sufficient pencils and pieces of paper for all participants.

A safe means of burning the paper.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

1. The Facilitator should ask the participants to shut their eyes for 3 minutes and listen to some calming music (classical, light jazz or some New Age tapes/CDs might be appropriate). As they listen, they are asked to relax their facial muscles for 20-30

seconds.

2. Participants are then asked to think of those things about their past that they find most troubling. Suggest that they consider things that have hurt them, such as rejection or abandonment by a parent or brother or sister. Or recall things that have shamed them, like being beaten or bullied, or used as a sexual object against their will. They might also think of things that they have done to themselves or to someone else that they wish they had never done because they feel guilty about it or it has harmed them or a relationship they wished to have maintained.
3. Participants are then asked to write down a reference to the experience, with either a codeword or a brief statement on small, separate (one per page) note pages—and to consider which ones they think have some possibility of simply being set aside and not dealt with and those they wish to talk about, whether with the Program Counselor, the Program Director, or the group. They are also asked to *save their notes in a private place* because they will be asked to return to them later on.
4. The participants should then break into pairs and, for 20 minutes, they should share experiences with each other, giving each other more or less equal time. The Facilitators must circulate to encourage the sharing of these ideas and to discourage trivialization of the exchange. Participants should then be asked to reconvene in the larger group.
5. A volunteer should be invited to be the focus of a circle talk, in which the bad experiences of the past are focused on and discussed by the group. With the assistance of the Facilitator (i.e., who should be a qualified counselor but this is not essential), and the group, the child should be asked to work through the process of selecting which experiences s/he would like to deal with through (a) private counseling (b) group discussion or (c) deal with by setting the experience aside (or, more often, aspect of the experience) and learning to move it out of focus and retain it as an occasional memory and *not* a frequently recurring preoccupation.
6. When 5 children have had their experiences considered by the group and have determined those things that they want to set aside, facilitate a "cleansing ceremony," in which participants are asked to burn crumpled up, written statements of their experiences in a central fire place (e.g., It is safest outside but a small fire can also be held in a large gym if appropriate care is taken. If the child has not saved the original statements made during the first session, then allow some time to write them down again. The Facilitator should pass a hat or container around and have the children say *With this I throw away a bad experience, never to worry about it again* as they toss the crumpled up statement in the container. The Facilitator should then empty the contents into the fire and, as the notes burn up, the Facilitator should make a ritualistic statement such as *With this fire, we, the Vision Seekers, burn up and thus cleanse (names) _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, of the worries and troubled thoughts we have about the experiences we have shared and we now set them aside and place behind them behind us. While we will have and will always learn from these experiences, will have also learned that we can live in a better way by stressing the gifts we have and the good*

things provided by Mother Earth. In this way we can be strong, living happily and in a good way rather than in a way that dwells in anger or sadness because of things we cannot change. An Elder should be asked to bless the ceremony and the children who have discarded the bad experiences.

7. All participants should be given the opportunity to complete the exercise.

NOTE: This exercise might well be carried out again *after* the other sessions dealing with anger are completed. It might also be used to deal with specific incidents in the lives of one or several of the youths in the program.



EXERCISE 8.4

IDENTIFYING ANGER-PRODUCING THINKING HABITS

OVERVIEW

This exercise returns to sociocognitive self-management theory to teach participants skills that will allow them to overcome ingrained thinking habits that frequently result in painful episodes of anger and counterproductive, anti-social or self-destructive reactions to that anger.

OBJECTIVES

1. To learn to identify ways of thinking that tend to unnecessarily trigger anger reactions.
2. To utilize group discussion to reinforce abilities to identify anger-triggering thinking processes.
3. To merge the process of eliminating anger-provoking thinking styles with positive alternative ways of thinking.

TIME REQUIRED

2 sessions: approximately 1 hour each

PHYSICAL SETTING

Large group: Circle

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

A flipchart and markers or a blackboard and chalk.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

1. The Facilitator should give a lecturette that includes the following profile of typical *negative thinking* categories that often lead to frustration and anger. It should be stressed that anger is not of itself a bad thing but if we have a tendency to think negatively, we are

not in charge of our own thoughts and emotions and negative thinking also tends to make us generally unhappy and, at times, depressed.

Lecturette: Categories of Negative Thinking

- Exaggeration:* You magnify the importance of problems or you minimize the good things in your life.
- Mind reading:* You jump to conclusions and tend to interpret things negatively, especially what other people are likely to think or do. You often think that people are generally against you, making you always suspicious of their motives.
- Dwelling:* You pick out a negative situation and think about it exclusively so that reality is dark and hopeless. One criticism can ruin many positive statements. You dwell on the little negative things and you tend to ignore the positive.
- All-or-nothing:* You think that if something doesn't work out perfectly, then you see it as a total failure. Because most situations tend to deviate somewhat from our expectations, this is a virtual invitation to constant disappointment and an unrelieved sense of life as a series of failures.
- Discounting:* You discount the positive and never give yourself or others credit for a job well done. Because you feel unrewarded, you build anger.
- External Control:* You tend to wait for the acknowledgement and affirmation of others before you can truly accept and feel good about for your thoughts and actions—and also wait for the judgement of others before you know whether something is right or wrong.
- Expectations:* You tell yourself things should be a certain way, such as expecting that people should act a certain way or say certain things. Because people don't do what they're expected to do at least as often as they do what is expected of them, your expectations are frequently disappointed, which you respond to with feelings of anger.
- Labelling:* You let other people categorize you or "hang a label" on you, such as "stupid," "klutz" (uncoordinated/bad athlete/incompetent with things physical), "liar" or "bad kid," and you accept the label and act in accordance with what it implies.
- Blaming:* You want and need control. If an event goes wrong, you may blame yourself, even if you are not responsible. Some people blame others for all of their problems and reject responsibility. Either way, it doesn't really work for you. It results in other people resenting you

and not trusting you and it fuels internal anger

2. The Facilitator should then go through each item in the profile and ask for examples of this type of thinking that group members have themselves been guilty of. Give everyone an opportunity to give at least one example.
3. Ask for volunteers to give examples of a problem they are having in their personal life and the way that they think about the problem. Ask the group to indicate any of the negative thinking styles the volunteer displays that may be getting in the way of solving the problem.
4. REPEAT the lecturette at a second session (also 1 hr.) In which alternatives to each category of negative thinking are considered, with the help of the talking circle.
5. The Facilitator should then have participants go back through the examples of negative thinking they identified and consider the following:
 - ☐ *Where who/what taught you to respond in this way to the problem?*
 - ☐ *Were the people involved in influencing your reactions good anger managers themselves? Could they benefit from new problem-solving strategies?*
 - ☐ *Are their people who actually influenced your reactions to the problem? Are they really trying to help you by encouraging such reactions?*
 - ☐ *Are there constructive ways of avoiding circumstances and people who triggered a destructive anger response in you?*

EXERCISE 8.5

ANGER WORKOUT:

A WAY TO CHALLENGE PROVOCATIONS

OVERVIEW

This exercise extends the anger management training to present concrete techniques for overcoming anger.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will learn a set of common provocations of anger.
2. Participants will learn some techniques for managing provocations when they experience them.
3. Participants will learn how to avoid anger-provoking situations and in most cases prevent angry thoughts from overcoming them.
4. Participants will practice anger management skills.

TIME REQUIRED

2 separate sessions, with only 30 minutes devoted to the first session, with the contents emphasizing background information and group discussion. The second session should be a full hour, which would be spent reviewing the material presented the first day and then completing the exercises and practicing the second session.

10-20 minute practise sessions carried out, as needed, as part of subsequent sessions.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

1. The Facilitator should begin with a lecturette based on the following contents:
-

Lecturette A: *Identifying Provocations*

"It is important for us to recognize *why* we get angry, to understand the things that actually provoke our anger--the things that get us really *torqued*. We're going to learn some ways of

- creating techniques that allow you to manage these provocations before they

escalate into something that turns ugly;

- teach you how to avoid certain situations that trigger anger

- give you some practice in how to manage anger so it is not something that controls you; in other words, give you some skills that allow you to be in control of your anger

"Psychologists have shown that when our thoughts are free of unrealistic or distorted thinking, it becomes easier to avoid anger and to preoccupy our thoughts with productive concerns that allow us to deal with situations in *winning* ways. Typically, when anger is our answer to problems, even when we feel justified in expressing it, we are left feeling unsatisfied, perhaps a little guilty. We also probably feel sort of childish and disliked rather than mature and admired by people around us.

"When people have tried to categorize what provokes anger, they have found that anger tends to originate in the following ways:

- *Frustration*: People often say *I'm frustrated*. What they mean that they are angry and their feelings have passed the point of simple frustration. When do we feel frustrated (ask group)? Suggest that we often feel frustrated when we can't get our way or we are disappointed about something. Then we react to that frustration with aggressive behaviour because we don't know how to work it out in a constructive way.
- *Annoyances*: The little things in life can often get to us, especially when we're tired, we're paying attention to something else or were on a downer (we're not feeling very good about things). Life's little irritations can really 'get on our nerves'; they kind of stack up and, before we know it, we're feeling mad, angry as heck.
- *Injustice*: We can also feel really angry when we believe haven't been treated fairly. One of the most common triggers for anger is when we feel falsely accused. It hurts and makes us angry when we are unjustly blamed for something we didn't actually do or didn't intend to do—or when something happens to us simply because we were in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- *Personal Attacks or Ridicule*: We also get angry when we've been hurt or abused verbally or physically. Teasing, name-calling, being made fun of in ways that seem malicious or humiliating, no matter what the intent threats or ongoing harassment, or hitting, punching or physical pain can cause deep hurt. Such feelings trigger anger, and they should. Unfortunately, that anger can lead us to do things that we regret and it can become deep-seated so that we are unable to discharge it, unable to "get it out of our systems," to release it. Such anger can become 'pent-up' within us and it can begin to affect much of our thinking and behaviour.

Knowing that your provocations can be identified with one of these categories can help you learn lasting skills to manage your behaviour."

-
2. Then facilitate an exercise that introduces them to *visualization techniques*.
-

Lecturette B: Visualization

"One technique that many people find especially effective is called **VISUALIZATION**. It is a technique that sports stars like Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and some of the best players in the NHL and even junior hockey, use.

"Here's a visualization exercise we can try:

Instructions

1. Try to remember something that has provoked your anger (not a huge provocation, start with something moderate),
2. Close your eyes and make sure that you have a clear picture of the scene that you remembered.
3. Focus on the image, using your concentration to clarify it, to make it become complete in your mind's eye.
4. Hold the image and feel any changes in your body (tension [muscle tightness/looseness] and heart rate).
5. Now take a deep breath and relax your muscles; then breathe in and out very slowly.
6. Keep the provocation scene in mind and picture your anger and feel your anger.
7. Again, take a deep breath and, relaxing your muscles, breathe in and out very slowly.
8. Repeat Steps 5 to 7 (verbally repeat the steps) the seriousness of the provocation starts diminishing in importance or, in other words, starts becoming less important to you."

Have participants do this with several provoking situations. Tell them they should repeat the exercise to the point at which they can recognize all the signs of anger in their minds and bodies. Once these "signs of anger" are identified, have them write down the signs.

Examples of such signs include:

- acceleration of one's pulse;
- a tightening of the muscles around the head;
- tension in the neck;
- butterflies in the stomach;
- a queasy feeling;

- a dry mouth.

Explain that visualization can be used to both manage feelings and to focus on the life you want.

Further explain that knowing what the sources of provocation for your anger and the signs of your anger enable you to develop preventive strategies. Tell them that the idea is not to *run away* from your anger but to use creativity, courage and self-control while bypassing anger. They say the worst enemy of a good soldier and a good boxer or martial artist of any kind is uncontrolled anger; the best friend self-control (which is to say, the management of one's emotions).

A Walk-through Exercise

Prepare participants for the exercise by telling them that, today, the task is to learn how to challenge situations and people that seem to *provoke* anger. Tell them that, ultimately, the same approach can be used effectively in any challenging situation and that, what they're going to learn is how to use the DETSCAT model to deal with situations that seem to provoke anger.

1. Hand out pencils and notepaper and ask Vision Seekers to write down a provocation (something that makes them mad), telling them that it is really just another Disruptive Event.
2. Ask them to also describe (write down) their initial Thoughts about the event (what it was about the event that was negative or made them feel they had to react to it).
3. Then ask them if there was a Social influence associated with the thought (the source of learning the automatic, negative interpretation, such as a friend, father or brothers and sisters or a more immediate social influence, such as a group of peers) and whether they think the problem might lie with the way they have let other people pressure them into negative interpretations of events.

Ask them if they know why they react in this way. Do they remember learning to react this way from other people? Are there certain rules that makes them feel they have to be angry in situations like the one they're describing?

Ask them if anybody "eggs them on" when they experience the frustrating situation that leads them to anger. Also ask: *Who influences you to act this way? Does anybody (include friends, acquaintances, even family members)?*

Ask them if the provocative situation they are describing is fueled by other people who "want to see them angry to get a little excitement"

4. Ask how they feel (Consequences) when they experience the situation (i.e., how it makes them feel and how they act when they have those feelings).

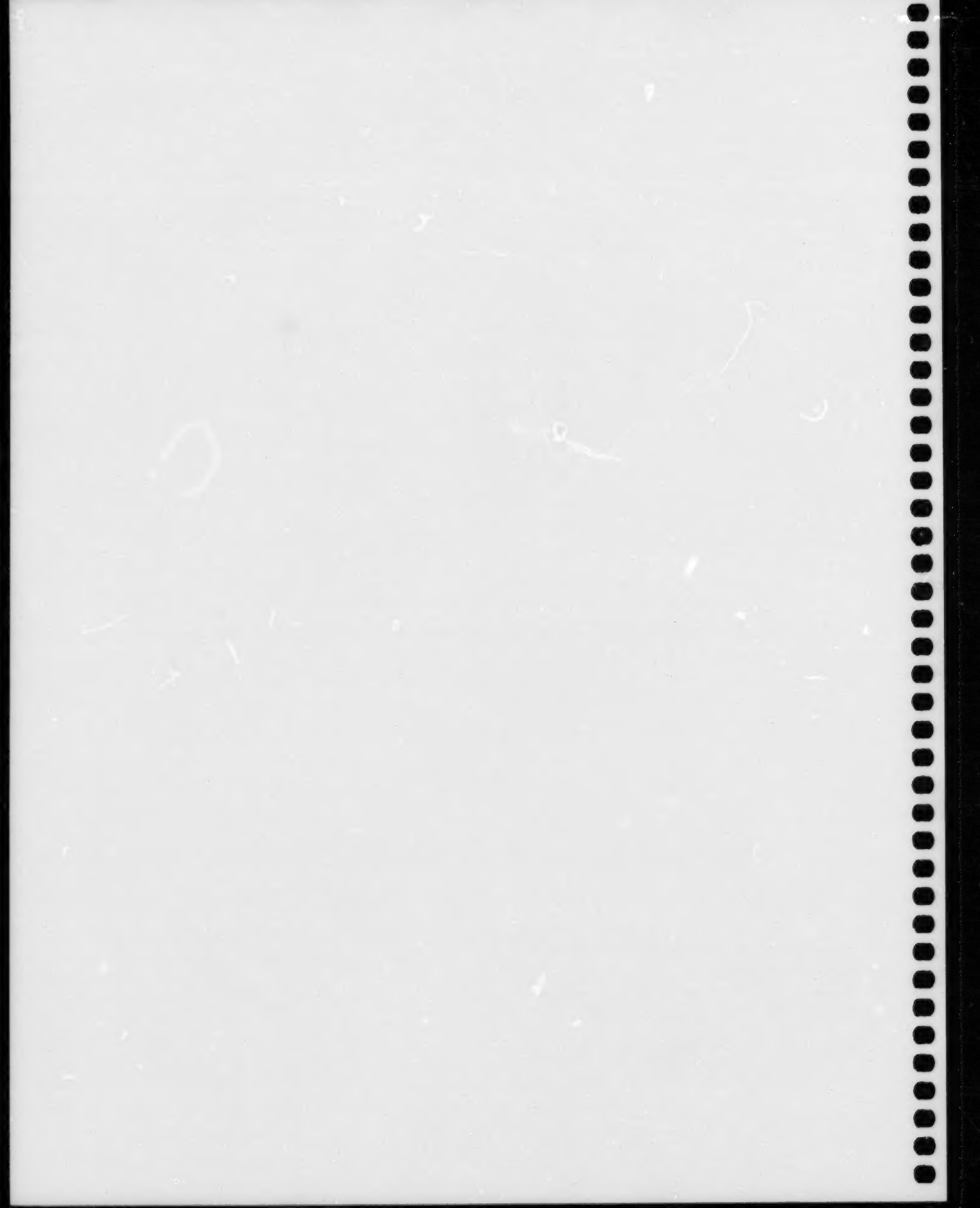
Have them consider what happens to them physically when they experience the

situation, such as what happens to their pulse rate, tension in their bodies, butterflies in their tummies, nervous shaking, dry mouth, rage, an intense desire to attack or be destructive.

Also have them indicate whether they actually act on their angry impulses or they just hold them in.

5. The last "writing" instruction is to revisit the experience briefly describe *why* they feel like they do about the situation.
6. Have participants list alternative Ts and Ss they could use to explain *why* they let the particular situation frustrate them and *who* encourages or reinforces feelings of frustration.
7. Then consider Actions (tempted) and Actions that make sense to Take (i.e. Ats): Have them list alternative ways of reacting to one's own emotion of anger that are (A) DESTRUCTIVE and (B) CONSTRUCTIVE—in other words, Actions that can be Taken to defuse the situation and are more constructive.
8. Reconvene in the larger group and have the larger group brainstorm to assist members deal with anger-provoking situations in constructive ways, by revisiting the conclusions drawn by the pairs in the small group.

Walk them through the steps and use different scenarios to practice. Use role plays, when appropriate.



EXERCISE 8.6

WHEN ANGER IS JUSTIFIED*

OVERVIEW

This exercise focuses on the fact that some anger is not only necessary, even therapeutic, but it is also fully justified. The question is: How do we identify legitimate anger and how do we best react to it? This exercise attempts to empower participants in their identification and use of justified anger.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will learn to accept and validate their anger.
3. Participants will learn to acknowledge and express their feelings rather than deny them.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Room for the group as a whole

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Fipchart and marker or blackboard and chalk

TIME REQUIRED

Several 40 min. to 1 hour sessions

PHYSICAL SETTING

Circle talk group in normal after-school Vision Seekers' meeting room.

* This exercise is derived from Rebecca R. Luhn's *Managing Anger: Methods for a Happier and Healthier Life*, Section III, pp. 41-47. Crisp Publications 1992.

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

The Facilitator should introduce the exercise with words that reflect the following thoughts:

When people accept their own anger, they are beginning to validate their feelings in a constructive way. What this means is that you are recognizing that you have feelings and those feelings should be denied. By acknowledging the existence of these feelings, you are in a position to take control of them, whether that is to use them constructively or destructively. All too often, we use them destructively and provoke anger in other people. The anger in the other people comes back to haunt us as a destructive reaction that hurts us; it ultimately "gets us," like a boomerang, thus defeating our very purpose in expressing our anger. Anger, expressed impulsively or destructively that hurts other people, begets the results of anger expressed against us. Often it creates a spiral or chain reaction that hurts many people.

The first step is to simply recognize that your anger is real and second, that it is legitimate.

Ask participants to walk through a process in which they say to themselves:

- "I feel angry! I can't help it. I feel angry—and that's all right!"
- Then have them ask themselves: "Is being angry right now going to help me in my current circumstance?" (Tell them that, typically, our anger is useless to us because of the way we respond to it, not because it is anger). Give some examples, for instance, being in a car with dad or mom lined up in thick traffic in the city trying to get back to the reserve on time to get to a ball game. In this instance, involving traffic gridlock that you can do nothing about (you're not even driving), your anger isn't going to do you any good. Getting miserable, for example, just gets everyone else mad at you and certainly invites no sympathy (In Los Angeles, this spiral of anger has resulted in "Freeway murders," in which people have shot other drivers out of frustration).
- Suggest that there is such a thing as *good* anger, and give examples:

Good Anger (Examples)

Anger is as good as its uses or, in other words, it is as good as what you do with it. Good anger can

- Give you energy to accomplish something necessary or desirable
- Help you communicate when you're upset
- Help you resolve inner conflict

- . Help you release tension in a positive way
- . Inspire new thoughts
- . Alert you to threats
- . Alert other people that you are upset and you should be dealt with in a way that is sensitive to your excited emotional state

Bad Anger (Examples)

Anger can also be used inappropriately, as it often is. It can

- Disrupt your immediate circumstances
- Function as a major source of disruption in your life
- Tempt you to do things to other people or to property that you'll later regret
- Come to be a preoccupation of your thoughts
- Ruin important relationships with other people
- Get you kicked out of school
- Get you in trouble with your parents and the police
- Cause health problems
- Cause other emotional problems

WHEN IS ANGER JUSTIFIED?

Ask participants if there is a difference between anger directed at *people* (rather than *things*) that is justifiable and anger that is not. Make it clear that the distinction is not between dismissing some feelings of anger outright and accepting others but between what is *just* and what is *unjust* (core concept: *justice*). Field a discussion and then make the point that, in your own opinion, whether or not anger is justified can be answered by responding to the following two questions:

1. Is my anger the result of a real or intentional threat made by someone else?
2. Is my anger the result of someone purposefully acting toward me in a hurtful way?

If, in any given situation involving other people, your answer is yes to these two questions, then your anger is justified.

Get participants to come up with some examples from their own lives, even from the group itself. Facilitate a discussion around just and unjust anger, using the group as the

judge but helping to clarify any confusion.

Indicate that a lot of anger has to do with us thinking that other people intend to hurt our feelings when they are just being sarcastic, or teasing, or themselves simply trying to divert attention from themselves, without giving even a second thought to our feelings. In other words, an awful lot of anger is created unnecessarily, because people often don't consider other people's feelings.

Some *just* examples of anger include:

- Someone makes a promise to you that is not kept
- A boyfriend or girlfriend lies to you about other relationships
- You are betrayed by a friend
- In terms of showing their love for you and caring for you, your parents don't act like you have heard parents should
- You are betrayed by an authority figure who you believe you are supposed to trust, such as a Vision Seekers' staff person, a teacher, or a coach
- Someone deliberately sets you up in an embarrassing situation

Some *unjustified* examples of anger include:

- A friend cannot keep a promise but they give you a good reason why and indicate that they feel badly about not being able to keep their word
- A boyfriend or girlfriend has another relationship but has always been honest about doing so
- Someone you trust betrays an expectation because they had to protect you from a greater threat (a more fundamental aspect of the trust relationship has taken precedence)
- It rains on a holiday trip
- Someone is sick and can't make the trip to the movie they'd set up with you

A key point is that we often get upset when there is no intention on the part of another person to harm us or someone we care about or something we care about. In other words, the source of our anger is really misplaced. Our distorted view triggers our angry thoughts and brings about a negative situation.

How to Use Anger Constructively

When your anger is just, you can use it as a source of energy. You can change a negative into a positive situation: a situation that will help you or eliminate the threat or hurt. Acting vengefully, whether yelling or striking out will only bring out more anger and hostility in reaction to you, may well get you into trouble and will lead to feelings of guilt later on.

So, how do you use angry energy to do something positive?

Provide the following examples of effective "assertive" styles of expressing anger:

- ▶ Acknowledge the other person's feelings (e.g., "So you've decided I'm the guy you'll make fun of this week . . . eh Joey?")
- ▶ State your view of the situation with confidence (e.g., "I know you think it's something I've done or said. As all I can say is that I'm sorry you're feeling upset but I didn't do what you think I did (or intend anything by it)."
- ▶ Don't alter your position in response to his or her visible emotions (It looks manipulative and tends to create further reaction)—and don't laugh or in any way try to belittle or dismiss the other person's anger.
- ▶ Slow the action down: Take your time in defusing your own emotional upset.
- ▶ Don't over-apologize.
- ▶ Don't put yourself down. It appears mealy-mouthed and invites disrespect or contempt.
- ▶ Don't put the person down who you think triggered your anger—and don't put others down to get out of the situation. It looks weak and, again, invites disrespect.
- ▶ Be specific. Talk to the words or action that triggered your strong emotions, *not* memories of past hurts or general feelings of being put upon by everybody.
- ▶ Be aware of your own voice and how it sounds.
- ▶ Also be aware of your body language (i.e., Don't be poised for a fight or defenseless looking or nervous and jumpy looking).

Get participants to practice different situations, using two role players and the rest of the group as coaches. Have them look at these examples as a basis for advice.

AVOIDING THE INITIATION OF ANGER

Anger is often "co-produced": Just as it "takes two to tango," so it often takes two to create a situation in which anger dominates. The Facilitator might now have the participants focus on what *they* often do that stimulates an anger reaction in others—and, with this awareness, they should be able to learn to *avoid* provoking anger in others when

they don't want to.

Start by suggesting: *There are some communication habits that tend to fuel other people's anger, often leading to conflict. By recognizing what these are, it is possible to have a sense of what is bothering us when other people irritate us—and things we can do to avoid stimulating other people's anger!*

Then have participants develop a list. Occasionally, intersperse their examples with the following:

- Being sarcastic
- Interrupting while someone else is talking
- Chuckling when someone else is talking seriously
- Ridiculing others, someone near to them, or something they own
- Being rushed for time, pacing and showing impatience with other people's attempts to communicate
- Acting bored
- Finishing someone else's story
- Interrupting someone else's conversation by correcting the details of their message or story
- Walking out of a room to take a call or talk to someone else when someone is talking to you
- Rephrasing what someone said in a negative way
- Not listening, then repeating a question that was just asked by someone else
- Fidgeting when someone is talking
- Jangling change in your pocket when someone else is talking
- Showing frustration by taking short breaths, clenching hands in a fist-like gesture
- Closing someone out by crossing your arms or rubbing your eyes or looking puzzled
- Dismissing someone's ideas by chuckling, shaking your head, walking away, or rolling your eyes
- Always looking like your ready to say something before someone has finished what they are saying
- Scowling or in other ways looking contemptuous of the other person
- Using an "evil eye fleagle" (a deadly stare intended to challenge or threaten someone)

Discuss different situations in which it is relatively easy and when it is difficult to avoid provocative behaviours. Ask for participants' examples.



STAGE 9

BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

These exercises are intended to foster in Vision Seekers the development of social relations based on mutual respect, dignity and thinking about the future consequences of present behaviour.

Friendships, positive own gender and age group relations, responsible sexuality and positive conflict resolution skills are the basic learning themes developed through the exercises.

EXERCISE 9.1

MAKING FRIENDS

OVERVIEW

This exercise is a straightforward exploration of what a real friendship is, as opposed to relationships between people based on exploitation or submission. The participants should be allowed a lot of creative room to define what they view as a friendship. Emphasis should be placed on not only what the characteristics of a real friendship are but what characteristics are indicators of a relationship that is *not* a friendship.

The intent is to facilitate a discussion in which the outcome suggests that a friendship involves the establishment and maintenance of a relationship in which both parties secure advantages and in which expectations are met regarding mutual respect and support during difficult times as well as good times.

OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage reflection on the part of Vision Seekers regarding what a true friendship is—and what kind of relationships are *not* real friendships.
2. To generate a group consensus on what constitutes a good friendship.
3. To encourage males and females to define cross-gender relationships as friendships in the same sense that male to male and female/male relationships can be friendships.
4. To assist participants lacking in friendships to explore ways of establishing friendships.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Space for the large group, as well as private space for writing and spaces for division of the larger group into pairs so that conversations cannot be overheard.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Pencils and note paper

TIME REQUIRED

1-1.5 hours

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

1. Ask participants to describe what a good friendship is, briefly summarizing answers on a flipchart pad.
2. Review responses, then ask participants to retreat to a desk and write out what they regard as a real or ideal friendship, then return to the full circle.
3. In the full circle, instruct participants that we are going to create a vision of what the *ideal* Vision Seeker's friendship would be like. Facilitate a consensus and indicate that the group will revisit the definition later on, to see if there should be any changes to it, if people have had second thoughts.
4. Next, ask participants to describe those behaviours that detract from a friendship. If they are stuck, you might ask the following questions:
 - Do real friends do things that might lead you to getting into trouble?
 - Do real friends dare you to do things?
 - Are real friends jealous of you?
 - Do real friends rely on you more than what you want?
 - Do real friends talk about you behind your back?
 - etc.
5. Tell participants that you now want them to explore just how satisfied they are with their own friendships. Ask them to break off in pairs and answer the following questions of their partners:
 - Do you consider yourself a good friend to people, when you have friendships? (Suggest that they consider their answers in light of the 'ideal' Vision Seekers' friendship characteristics)
 - Who do you regard as close friends? How many are there? Would you like more friends?
 - Do you think you have enough casual friends? Would you like more?
 - What are some of the things your friends do that make you sometimes think they're not good friends?

6. Ask people to return to the whole group circle. Ask for a volunteer to come to the centre of the circle and ask the group to help them develop characteristics that will make them a better friend. Do this allaround the circle. Ensure that the discussion is fair and reasonable rather than negative and oppressive.



EXERCISE 9.2

HEALTHY MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

OVERVIEW

Under the influence of hormones, early adolescence brings with it the beginning of intense curiosity about the sexual differences between males and females—and all the intrigues, pleasure and excitement those differences carry with them. This exercise sets out to introduce some balance into the Vision Seekers' exploration of differences by getting them to think about what both genders share in terms of their common psychological and social needs.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will participate in a serious discussion with same-sex peers
2. Participants will have an opportunity to ask the "opposite sex" questions that they would rarely ask about relationships and dating
3. Participants will enhance their sense of belonging with same-sex group members
4. Participants will increase their awareness of sex role stereotyping
5. Participants will increase their awareness of the perspective of the opposite sex

MATERIALS

1. Pens or pencils
2. Note-sized paper
3. Two small boxes or baskets

PROCESS

In this exercise, girls sit on the floor in a circle. The boys will sit behind them in chairs so that they can look in on the girls' discussion. Then boys and girls exchange places, and the girls observe the boys' discussion.

At the beginning of the session, the boys and girls break into separate groups and decide on questions to ask the other group (and sex) about sex roles. The focus is on male-female

relationships.

Tell the group that today's session offers them a unique opportunity. They will have a chance to ask the other sex to share their thoughts and opinions on dating and relating. The boys will listen in as the girls read and discuss questions from the boys. Then the girls will listen as the boys read and discuss questions from the girls.

The boys and girls will get together with one or two same-sex members and think up questions to ask the other group.

Questions provided by the facilitator are helpful to get the process moving. Good questions to use as examples are:

How can you tell when someone likes you?

What makes for an ideal boyfriend (or girlfriend)?

What would you like to do if you were on a date?

What style of clothing do you like on boys/girls the most?

Have the questions written on note-sized paper (one only) and folded up. Then collect the questions.

Place the basket of questions from the boys into the middle of the group of girls. Instruct the girls to take turns around the circle, drawing a question and reading it aloud. The person reading the question is in charge of discussion of that question. The boys may not contribute to the discussion unless they first are recognized by the discussion leader. Boys must raise their hands and wait to be recognized. After all of the questions from the boys have been discussed, or after the girls have used approximately half of the time in the hour, girls and boys change places. Now the boys read and discuss questions from the girls.

Ask the girls not to speak until recognized by the discussion leader.

Have the boys' questions to the girls are collected in a basket or box. The girls' questions to the boys are collected in a separate basket or box.

The girls should then form a circle, seated on the floor. The boys should sit behind them in chairs.

The girls should then take turns drawing the boys' questions from the basket, one at a time. The girl drawing the question should then read it aloud. With the facilitator's assistance if necessary, each question is then discussed, and answered.

A similar process is then repeated, with boys and girls changing places.

CONCLUDING THE SESSION

Save about 10 minutes to use for illuminating examples of sex role stereotyping that almost always emerge during this exercise. The group should be challenged to think about prejudice held towards the other sex. Ask participants to consider how preconceptions and prejudice affect the way they think, feel, and behave with the other sex.

You might also ask the group to share what came up during the exercise that surprised them or was new to them.



EXERCISE 9.3

BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Have an opportunity to ask, in confidence (i.e., in writing or privately with the Facilitator), questions about sex.
2. Talk about sexual issues in a group consisting of both males and females.
3. Talk about sexual issues in a same sex group.
4. Listen to accurate answers to questions posed by group members.
5. Correct misconceptions about sex
6. Experience a serious conversations about sex as a topic in a structured, safe environment

A therapist or a health worker (nurse, health educator, sex educator, etc.) who is both knowledgeable and has some experience in providing sex education to youth at the age of puberty is a must for this exercise. It is recommend that both a knowledgeable male and female facilitator work together as a team, if possible. You should have someone with a trained knowledge of human biology and sexuality on hand.

MATERIALS

1. Note-sized paper
2. Pens or pencils
3. A container, such as a basket, box, or other container

PROCESS

The Facilitator should explain that this session has been prepared to answer any questions that group members may have about sex. Then s/he should ask the group to think of questions about sex and to write each question down on a slip of paper, only one question per slip. They should be asked to think about questions about sex that are of most interest to them or that they think other group members could benefit from answers to. The questions should be asked of the Director in private or written anonymously, folded up, and dropped into a

container supplied by the Director. Papers then should be folded up and dropped into the container.

Give the group at large a chance to provide the answer; if nothing is forthcoming, the Facilitator and/or Co-facilitator should answer the question. The questions should be anonymous to encourage more genuine participation. Each question drawn should be answered unless the question obviously is intended to embarrass, humiliate, or "gross out" the leaders or members or to poke fun at the subject matter.

The lead Facilitator draws questions out of the container, one at a time, and reads them aloud. The Facilitator and Resource people then answer them thoroughly.

A group discussion should then be facilitated.

CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise is fairly demanding and the facilitators and resource people should be both knowledgeable about the subject and skillful at handling teen questions about sex. The subject of teenage sexuality is a loaded subject. While the Facilitator who condones open or indiscriminate sexual behavior is irresponsible, the facilitator who moralizes is dismissed as irrelevant by the kids.

The following list outlines the usual obstacles to this discussion and offers approaches that may assist the group leader in overcoming them:

1. *Anticipate a good deal of discomfort and resistant to dealing with the subject. Expect giggles and jokes and other forms of attempted resistance.* But don't panic! The more unruffled and in control you appear, the more quickly this initial reaction subsides.

Explain to your group that this is an opportunity to talk about a subject and get answer to questions that is simply not available anywhere else. Vision Seekers provides an environment where boys and girls can talk about some of the things they are most interested in without fear of being judged, or getting in trouble, or having peers think they're ignorant, naive or weird.

2. *One or two influential members decide they're above it all.* Common comments in response to the instructions are "I don't have any questions; I already know everything," and "This is stupid; what is there to ask?"

Respond by saying that only unintelligent people don't have questions. Smart people are always curious, always looking for answers to questions. So let's have a go at it!

3. *Questions asked by the group may seem to require moral judgements in the answer.* For example, questions about abortion often come up. Explain that this is not a forum for questions of morality. You might facilitate a discussion but *don't take a firm position* other than indicating your own belief. Encourage members to discuss those concerns with parents, peers, educators, and spiritual authorities of their choosing. If you *advocate* a

position, parents of contrary views could be angered and seek (perhaps successfully) to shut down the program.

4. *When you aren't sure about the answer to a question, tell the group that you don't know the answer but that you'll find out and report back next session.*

It is probably appropriate for the facilitator or resource person to make a simple, short statement about his or her own moral convictions regarding teen sexual relations, for example:

In my opinion, teenagers should not be sexually active—that is, have sexual intercourse. Because of the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, the deadly nature of AIDS, and of causing an unplanned pregnancy, it is probably wise to refrain. Active sexual relations amongst young people puts young people in emotional situations for which they are not prepared. In my view its not really a question of what's right or wrong, it's what's smart and responsible. It's a question of emotional maturity. If you are sexually active, I don't judge you. I just wish that you make a different choice.

A sample of questions asked by teenagers might be helpful?

How does a girl get pregnant?

Do you have to have intercourse to get pregnant?

What is "rape?"

What is sexual assault?

What is an IUD?

Do girls masturbate?

Do most boys masturbate?

Is having sex the same as love?

Can a girl get pregnant during her period?

Can a boy have a period?

Do girls care so much about the size of a guy's penis?

How do girl get sexual pleasure? Is it different from the way boys do?

What is oral sex?

How do you know when you have an orgasm?

Why do boys always want girls to give them head?

Can girls get pleasure from oral sex?

What are some common sexually transmitted diseases?

How do you get AIDS?

Can you get AIDS by shaking the hands of a person who is HIV positive? What does 'HIV positive' mean?

Can you get blinded by getting ejaculated sperm in your eye?

Does masturbation stunt your growth?

Do girls have wet dreams?

Where is a clit?

How do guys have sex with guys?

Why is it harder for girls to get off than boys?

Why do boys say they love girls to have sex with you, and then call them sluts?

How do you know if you're homosexual?

Do girls like to have their boobs sucked?

Is it dangerous to your health to swallow cum?

What is PMS?

Can you be pregnant and still have a period?

How do you use a condom?

What are the various means of practicing birth control?

Should boys be as responsible as girls about practicing safe sex?

What is a tubal pregnancy?

ADD OTHER QUESTIONS THAT SEEM TO BE PERTINENT!

CONCLUSION

Conclude the session by reminding the group that human beings are sexual beings. For the species to survive, we must reproduce. To reproduce, we must have sex. Sex is not only used for the purposes of growing people, however, but to have pleasure as well. The greatest pleasure can be achieved when we practice safe sex and we do not use it as a means of humiliating people.

EXERCISE 9.4

BUILDING MUTUALLY SATISFYING RELATIONSHIPS

OVERVIEW

The core concept in this exercise is "social symmetry" in relationships—or, in other words, relationships based on mutual respect, equality of power, and fairness. In short, the exercise focuses on healthy relationships and attempt to show practical ways to develop and sustain them.

An important component of this section is the rehearsal of respectful, non-coercive relationship skills. Positive communication is the main focus, including specific skills: active listening, empathy, and emotional expressiveness. Specific communication skills are promoted, and emphasis is given to the need for males to ensure consent in sexual relations and the value of females being clear, up-front, and safe.

OBJECTIVES

1. To define different aspects of healthy relationships
2. To compare and contrast healthy and unhealthy relationships
3. To develop healthy relationship skills

TIME FRAME

3 sessions - 1-1.5 hours each

PROCESS DIRECTIONS

This session focuses on defining healthy relationships and developing skills that can contribute to the development of healthy, non-power-tripping, relationships.

Introduce the session by explaining that the session will focus on our understanding and development of skills that help create health, relationships. These skills will include active listening (i.e., paraphrasing, empathy, and asking for clarification) and learning to identify internal and external cues that signify emotions.

Ask youths to brainstorm what they think a healthy relationship looks like. If they do not come up with the ideas contained in the following list, suggest these qualities and ask for the teens' opinions.

- Trust
- Sharing of thoughts, ideas, feelings
- Respect for each other's thoughts, ideas, and feelings
- encouraging and supporting each other to grow
- Each person feels safe to express disagreement and negative feelings including anger, disappointment, frustration, and so on
- Each person feels safe when the other person expresses disagreement and negative feelings.

Once the list of what constitutes a healthy relationship has been completed, ask youths to identify the opposite qualities; for example, the opposite of trust might be jealousy. Ask the teens to identify *why* these qualities are unhealthy.

ATTENDING EXERCISE

This exercise demonstrates good attending and nonattending. After the completion of the exercise, discuss how rushing in with advice or solutions is another example of nonattending behavior because of the following:

- Your partner may not be ready to make any decisions.
- Your partner may only need someone to listen, not to give answers.
- Rushing in with advice implies that the partner's feelings are unimportant.
- Your partner may feel like you think he or she isn't capable of making his or her own decisions.

Instructions

Have the participants break off into pairs, then hand out descriptions of *nonattending behaviours* to both partners. You should let them think that they are getting different instructions)

Examples of non-attending behaviours (Hand out as Cards):

- Avoid eye contact.
- Yawn, fiddle with your watch, adjust your clothes, etc.
- Sit with your body very rigid and your facial muscles taut
- Be so relaxed you almost look like you're ready to fall asleep..
- Look bored or distracted.

Have the participants carry on a 2-4 minute conversation, following the nonattending instructions. Then, stop the conversation and take the cards back, not letting them see the other's card.

Hand out a description of *attending behaviours* to each partner, again letting them think they are getting different instructions.

Examples of Attending Behaviours (i.e., examples of paying attention to what someone else is really trying to tell you):

- Face the person
- Maintain good eye contact (friendly, open, not squinting or staring, not "locked" on theirs.
- Have a *relaxed/receptive* posture.
- Lean a little toward the other person.
- Have an *open* posture.

Again, have the participants carry out a 2-4 minute conversation following the *attending* behaviour instructions. Ask participants to withhold any conversation (between partners) after they have finished, saving it for the group.

When the conversations are completed, reconvene the group.

Group Discussion

Facilitate a discussion. Ask participants to focus on their feelings when they encountered *both* positive and negative attending styles. Also focus on *how quickly their feelings developed in response* to the attending styles and the *intensity* of their reactions.

Encourage participants to focus on their nonverbal behaviours, suggesting that some experts believe that vastly more communication takes place between people through nonverbal behaviours than words (i.e.,g through gestures, frowns, posture, shrugs, looks of distraction, looks of careful attention, etc.).

Ask participants to get really specific about the way that messages were communicated

verbally and nonverbally and what stood out for them.

EMPATHY EXERCISE

This exercise should be started by having the participants define "empathy." Summarize the discussion by providing the following working definition: *Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes so you can understand how the world feels from his or her point of view.* Point out the emphasis on understanding another person's feelings.

Divide the youths into pairs, assigning one youth to the role of the listener and the other to the role of the speaker. One cofacilitator outlines the task for the speakers, and the other outlines the task for the listeners. Neither group should know what the other group is doing ahead of time. Once the teens understand their roles, have them sit with their partners and provide them with 2 minutes to conduct the exercise.

Presentation of the Speaker Role: Provide the speakers with "problem scenarios." (One scenario can be used for all the pairs, or if the youths seem ready, ask the speakers to use a real problem that they would be willing to discuss with the listener.) *Do not tell the listener what the problem is ahead of time.*

Problem Example: You have just begun working in the local convenience store. A few weeks after you started, money began to be missing from the till, and the manager accused you of stealing it, even though the manager had no proof. You have absolutely nothing to do with the missing money and you know the accusation is unfair. You really need the job, but the manager has threatened to fire you the next time money is missing.

Presentation of the Listener Role: Present the listener's role by stating that they are going to "play detective." Their only job is to try and understand the speaker's underlying feelings. In this exercise, the listener listens to the speaker describe the problem and responds *only by reflecting back the speaker's feelings*. For example, they can respond by saying, "It sounds like you feel really angry," or "it seems like you're really hurt that the manager would think that." Tell the listeners not to ask any questions; their only job is to try and understand and reflect back the speakers' feelings. Warn them that this will probably feel strange and a little awkward but that we will only give the pairs 2 minutes to do the exercise.

Group Discussion: Once the youths have gathered back together, ask the listeners how they felt during the exercise. They will probably say that it felt awkward and artificial. Next, ask the speakers how it felt to be listened to in this manner, and how it felt to have their feelings reflected back to them. In general, the speakers will probably have more positive things to say about the experience. Compare and contrast the listeners' and the speakers' experience of the exercise. Summarize by saying that new ways of communicating can feel really strange

at first, especially because we're often taught that we should handle another person's problems by providing answers. However, this is rarely helpful to the person with the problem, and often not what he or she is looking for. Finish by saying that empathy is about really trying to understand the other person's position rather than simply trying to win an argument (sometimes people even forget what they are arguing about).

COMMUNICATING ACCURATELY

The Director/group worker should briefly talk about the difficulties of accurate communication and why it is important to develop skills in this area. Why? Essentially because most conflicts can be traced inaccurate or confused communications. One example of how this miscommunication takes place is the game "rumours."

THE RUMOUR CIRCLE

The group should be convened in a circle and the facilitator should select one of the participants to read a three or four paragraph story. The reader should then be asked to paraphrase the story in private, out of hearing range of the group.

Next, have the person who heard the story share the story with the person next to him/her, breaking away a few feet from the group and whispering.

The story should go around the entire circle.

The last person should be asked to tell the story to the group. Typically, the last version is very different than the first.

Do the exercise two or three times.

The facilitator should make up the first story, giving it a fair amount of detail and embellishing it with some juicy facts to maintain interest.

The second and third story might be prepared by participants.

Summarize

The facilitator should summarize by pointing out that spreading gossip and rumours leads to inaccurate and ineffective communication because the story usually gets changed and distorted. The point is that paraphrasing or summarizing another person's story is a difficult task and it takes work to get a story straight. Further, the final story frequently sounds a lot more extreme than the original. You might ask if any of the participants have been the subject of gossip that is hurtful and inaccurate.

With the facilitator's help, the group should explore *why* paraphrasing and summarizing, indeed the whole set of tasks involved in listening and communicating our understanding of

other people's messages, is so difficult—and why it is worth the effort (i.e., look at all the hurt feelings and conflicts and accidents that are routinely caused by people not learning to listen to each other and to communicate the fact that they have listened).

BRAINSTORM

Do a brainstorm on *what are some of the other common sources of inaccurate communication*, e.g.,

- deliberately false rumours;
- people not thinking clearly when they speak;
- inaccurate facts;
- people not listening;
- people not communicating the fact that they have listened;
- people listening but not understanding and pretending that they do understand (i.e., to avoid the frustration of others or to avoid “appearing to seem dumb”), etc.

EXERCISE 9.5

THE BURDENS OF YOUTHFUL PARENTING

OVERVIEW

This exercise is intended to confront young people with the realities and consequences of early and unplanned childbirth—consequences for both themselves and children born to people unprepared for taking care of children. It is hoped that through this exercise, the participants will learn to practice safe sex and to delay having children until they are ready to take care of them economically and emotionally.

OBJECTIVES

1. To present information about the predictable consequences of early childbirth and unplanned childbirth to Vision Seekers.
2. To create a set of role plays that will engage Vision Seekers empathetically with the plight of a young parent and a child born to a young mother who has no means of providing for the child and has virtually no experience with being a parent.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The regular after-school program space should be fine but some private space will also be required.

TIME REQUIREMENTS

Varies, dependent on the time staff wish to devote to it. A full two hour session (or two 1 hour sessions) is probably minimal, however

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Recipe cards and a pen.

Masking tape or safety pins to attach role labels on role-players.

Dolls weighted to 10 lbs.

PROCESS INSTRUCTIONS

The Facilitator should provide some data to show how large numbers of young people are having children, yet are unprepared for the role of being a parent and all that the parent role entails. Provide information on the likelihood of poverty, unemployment, health problems for mother and child and the loss of a range of opportunities for both (See Chapter 2 of Volume 1 of Vision Seekers). Indicate that you think that often young people decide to have children or at least they don't try very hard *not* to have children because they haven't had the opportunity to think through what it means to have children. This exercise provides an opportunity to consider what young parenting is really like.

Proceed as follows:

1. Hand out blank recipe cards or small pieces of paper and ask all participants why they think teens might actually want to have a baby while they are still in their teens. Then collect the answers.
2. Give each person who will play the role of parent a doll that they will have to take care of, as if it were a baby, throughout the session. One of the staff should act as a "Crying Voice," circulating to just behind each parent role player every 4 or 5 minutes and crying until the person responds to one of the following needs: feeding; cold; need for soothing; need for stimulation; diaper rash; can be determined (cry goes on and on and the individual simply has to withdraw and sit).
3. Give each person one of the following large (easily readable) name tags: "Dr. Baby Care," "Dr. Fun," "Dr. Family Relations," "Dr. Education," "Dr. Employment Opportunities," "Dr. Mother's Health," "Dr. Baby's Health."
4. Give each "Doctor" a card with a list of responsibilities of parenting and likely consequences of parenting before being older and more prepared, as suggested by the research (*Note:* Again, see some of the research generalizations in Volume 1). It is important that facilitators themselves not only read that section but do some investigation themselves, getting recent data on local or regional realities.
5. Ask one of the participants (first a female, then a male) to take the role of a young person who has a baby. Have her (later him) take a couple of minutes and write down her reasons for wanting the baby.
6. Establish a "Reality Journey" that will involve the young person wanting to be a mother carrying the baby around a course of activities for a full two hours (changing the baby's diapers [use artificial stools, such as coloured porridge mixed with peanut butter], changing clothes, and getting in and out of cars) with the "baby's voice" often expressed by one of the facilitators.

Then, at various intervals, have the mother with the baby sit and watch other participants playing prospective parents who are visiting experts to find out about what to expect if they have responsibility for a baby when they are very young. The various experts will be seated at a desk (or on the floor) in the middle of the circle. Each time there is a change of expert,

the young person will have to indicate how they will make arrangements for self and baby to get to the appointment. The reality journey will consist of seeking and getting advice from various "experts" in the following areas:

- Practical parenting responsibilities (If possible, have a Parent Educator play this role and later do a full session response to this area) and the needs of babies at different stages of development.
 - The social and recreational life of a single parent teen mother (Expert: Professor Entertainment)
 - Family relations (Expert: Dr. Family [A Health Educator or a CH R or Nurse might perform this role].)
 - The educational prospects and difficulties of single moms (Expert: Dr. Teach).
 - The employment prospects for single moms (Expert: Dr. Work).
 - Mother's Health (Expert: Dr. Mom).
 - Baby's Health (Expert: Dr. Child).
7. Have each expert prepare by reading cards and adding some of their own thoughts.
 8. Ask the prospective parent to walk through the exercise of approaching each expert and asking the question, "I'm 15 years old [i.e., the pretend, not the real age of the participant] considering having a baby, could you tell me what the pitfalls of having a baby at my age would be? I have to tell you, I really, really would like to have a baby!" The first expert should be a staff person or, if possible, a Parenting or Early Childhood Development Educator. Each expert should work from their own thoughts and the cards as they answer the question.
 9. Use the group also as the "Alter Ego," having them challenge the advice of the expert, giving reasons *why* having a baby during adolescence is a "cool" and/or gratifying and constructive thing to do. If there is no balance in the exercise, the lesson will be a weak one. Encourage open discussion and debate.
 10. Finish with a discussion and some suggested *alternatives* to meeting needs (other than having a baby).

Depending on the nature of the group atmosphere at the time, the lessons gleaned from the exercise might be reinforced with an outline lecture.



STAGE 10

DEVELOPING SELF BY HELPING OTHERS: THE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

The final stage of the Vision Seekers program involves the engagement of the participants in a community services project. Through these means, the lessons of problem-solving, personal responsibility and the moral and emotional benefits of helping out other members of the group are extended to either disadvantaged members of the community or to the community as a whole. The last material in this second volume comprises a guide to developing and implementing relevant community service projects that each youth can participate in.



EXERCISE 10.1

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

OVERVIEW

This exercise addresses the community service goals of the participants. The intention is to use the group as a whole as a *community council, board or community task force* to help each individual or sub-group of the program plan the initiation and ongoing maintenance of a significant community service activity. The purpose is to link some of the problem-solving skills and other learning acquired through the Vision Seekers program to the community. Most important are the rational reasoning and empathic thinking skills; in fact, the underlying premise is that the rational thought processes and empathic attitudes nurtured in the program will now be extended from thinking styles and attitudes oriented to the individual, the group and the family to others in need in the community and to the community as a whole.

GOALS

1. To provide a context and support system for the participants in their attempts to realize their community service goals.
2. To promote the importance of altruism as a value.
3. To have participants experience the emotional rewards of giving selflessly to those in need rather than receiving.
4. To extend rational reasoning, empathic skills and systemic, causal thinking from dealings with individuals, family members, friends and the Vision Seekers group to working with non-familial members and with the community as a whole.
5. To provide participants with the experience of leadership decision-making.

MATERIALS

At various points in the project:

- Notepads and pencils
- Flip chart paper and flip charts and felt pens
- Scotch tape to tape flip chart paper up on walls
- Others, depending on the individual projects

TIME REQUIRED

An introductory 1-1.5 hrs. orientation session.

Planning support sessions of half hour duration (or as required) every 2 weeks

The projects should extend from the beginning of Year 2 to 6 or 8 months into the session (to be completed prior to the summer Vision Seekers camp).

INSTRUCTIONS

The Director should hold an orientation session for the project, beginning in the second or third session of the second year. To create an initial focus on the projects, you might say:

There are probably things happening around you that you don't like! Things that frustrate you or make you mad because you think that you aren't getting a fair shake. Well, we've talked a lot about our own problems and we've looked at various ways of solving them or coping with our troubles if they aren't solvable problems. But you've probably also seen other people get a raw deal or have a lot of needs that often aren't met—people that are easy to forget because they have no power. They are too old or too young, too weak or defenceless, too unpopular, or they suffer from some major physical or mental disability and they therefore have trouble taking care of themselves. Do you ever dream that you could change things for them, you know, make things a little better for them?

Well, there are many First Nations' young people who think the same way. They go a little further, though: They plan their actions in this regard and they do something. They help the people in the community that they have some concern about.

In Vision Seekers, you're going to do something about some of those people you are concerned with. We're all going to be involved in a community service project.

Then go on to give them some definitions of *community*. We've relied heavily on the pamphlet, *SAY Community Action*, produced by Health Canada as part of its *Community Action Pack*. In that pamphlet, the following definitions of community are provided:

A community can be the place you live. It can be the persons you identify with.

A community can be something tangible, something real, like a First Nation's territory, for instance.

It can also be something intangible, something that exists because a bunch of people believe that it exists and this motivates them to act in certain ways. For example, community can be a group of friends that you're comfortable with.

There are also communities within communities. You may be part of more than one community.

Ask the participants: *What is a healthy community?*

After hearing the versions of participants, you might suggest that, in your mind, a healthy community is not an end product but a process; in other words, it is the way a group of people go about facing the challenges that confront them.

For example, a community may have a lot of elderly people who are lonely, a lot of young people who are bored and anxious and getting into a lot of fights with each other and in conflict with the law. The community may have a very high rate of accidents or injuries, of problem drinking, of communicable diseases. All of these are sources of ill health, indicators that there are health problems in the community. But *all* communities have various health problems and those problems fluctuate in degree over time.

All of the problems mentioned have some impact on the health of individuals in the community but they also challenge the community to work towards solving such problems. A healthy community is one that can work together effectively to solve those problems. By working together cooperatively, the impact of the many health problems in the community will be reduced. All the things that make community a good place to live or satisfying about a group to belong to are what community health is about. In other words, health means looking after ourselves and others.

COMMUNITY ACTION: WHAT IS IT?

Take a little time to go through the concept of community action, suggesting that, traditionally, small First Nations' communities in what is now Canada were *extremely* proactive as communities. Everything was done locally, with no outside assistance except through trade between First Nations or Bands. Taking care of children, protecting the people from enemies or from wild animals, hunting and sharing meat, gathering berries and herbs, fishing and sharing fish, or growing crops. These were all done by the people themselves.

Today, there is much reliance on the cash economy and the government for services of various kinds but local initiatives are still extremely important and typically, these must be done by volunteers.

When 15 youths were called together in the development of a National Aboriginal community action program to identify what *community action* meant to them, some of the things they said included the following:

- ☐ a process that creates change
- ☐ actions that create change
- ☐ making a difference in your community

- ▣ being part of the solution rather than part of the problem
- ▣ making positive stuff happen in the community
- ▣ people helping people
- ▣ raising awareness of the plight of some people in the community
- ▣ addressing a social problem
- ▣ coming together to take action
- ▣ protecting Mother Earth from human stupidity
- ▣ cleaning up the environment

AN EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Read the following case example of a community problem that could potentially be dealt with through concerted community action:

Bud Littlewolf and Joanne Longfeather are Woodland Cree youth who live in northern Manitoba. They live in a remote community some 200 km. from Thompson, the closest major town. The local aboriginal population includes Cree, Metis and Non-status Indian people. The unemployment rate is very high, with most families depending on welfare. Alcohol abuse and family violence are virtually a part of the way of life in the community.

Solvent abuse among children in the community is a major problem. School-age children are most likely to be involved in an ongoing way: Young people between the ages of 8 and 15 years old. Gas and glue are legal products that are readily available. The local NNADAP Worker is aware of the problem and very concerned but young people don't relate easily to him. The Worker has spoken to the young people in school about the problem, warning of its lethal effects, and virtually all the school population between ten years old and fifteen years old are aware that the problem is widespread (Note: Take some time to describe just how lethal "sniffing" solvents can be). Bud and Joanne also know, as does the NNADAP Worker, that, while virtually all young children experiment with solvent sniffing, there is a small and growing core of frequent and very reckless "sniffers."

Bud and Joanne share the NNADAP Worker's concern and believe that something must be done before too many children are addicted and before anyone dies from an overdose. Other than some talks to the young people by the NNADAP Worker, Bud and Joanne are not aware of much of anything being done to intervene in order to prevent the problem. They think that the parents simply don't know that such a problem exists but they are also worried that many parents have such serious problems of their own that they can't focus on the needs of their children.

To maximize their efforts, Bud and Joanne talk to Doug Wolf-Chaser, who has worked with young people for many years and now operates the local friendship centre. Doug is very helpful. He calls together some of the Elders and they meet with him, Bud, Joanne and the NNADAP Worker at the friendship centre.

The group agrees that solvent abuse is a serious problem. They form what they call a helping circle and attempt to include parents of some of the children implicated in the problem. They find that it is somewhat difficult because many of these parents have addictions problems, spending a lot of time drinking or playing bingo or the VLTs.

The group finds that some people are very enthusiastic initially but interest wanes. It is difficult to sustain their interest. Many are very shy and they won't speak their minds at the helping circle meetings. There is disagreement often. But Bud and Joanne persevere, with the encouragement and help of the NNADAP Worker and the director of the friendship centre. In time, there is a consensus reached on how to tackle the problem.

The group decides that for those children who have become addicted, inpatient treatment outside of the community is necessary, followed by ongoing counseling and involvement in a program in the community when they come home. Counseling and a discussion group are needed for those who sniff quite often but don't seem to be addicted. Mostly, the kids need constructive recreational activities.

While there are many options, resources are limited, so they decide to focus on an after-school recreation program.

They need a gathering place and the director of the friendship centre agrees to provide space. Another man agrees to fund raise and to "scrounge" for sports equipment, and the friendship centre's equipment can also be used. A craftswoman agrees to provide craft supplies and to teach traditional crafts. Bud, Joanne and the NNADAP Worker agree to coordinate and supervise the program.

After a lot of work, things begin to fall into place and the program really operates. Team sports and games are organized, volleyball being a favourite. There is also storytelling time, with one of the Elders teaching the young people how to tell stories and the kids then participating themselves. The Elder's stories about the spirit world make them think. Some funny stories make them laugh.

For most children who participate in the program, it is a welcome diversion from boredom. The NNADAP Worker has worked actively to get those needing more intensive help into treatment and so far, three have been referred to a treatment centre and been accepted. Some of the kids simply drop out and start sniffing again but, for most, sniffing is either a thing of the past or occurs only occasionally.

After two years of fairly successful programming, Bud and Joanne are honoured by the Chief and Council at a special ceremony. The two of them are most gratified when a boy named Jake made a special presentation of a dream catcher he had made, thanking them

for their efforts. Jake had been one of the children at greatest risk from solvents. He had been in treatment. After returning to the community from the inpatient centre, he participated very actively in the program, becoming somewhat of a leader in sport activities. Bud said to Jake: "Thanks, guy. This means more to me than anything that has happened to me today!" Joanne gave Jake a big hug and, while she smiled, she couldn't hold back a tear. Inside her mind she heard a resolute YES!!!

Joanne and Bud agree to spread word amongst the kids, encouraging their participation.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY HEALTH PROBLEMS

Ask the participants to identify people in the community who they think have health problems and who need some help in dealing with them or general issues in the social or physical environment that should be addressed. Specify that they should not just think about physical health problems but social problems like isolation and loneliness, the need for protection, etc.

Write down each identified group/problem on a flip chart pad page (one problem per page) [e.g., lonely Elders; stray dogs posing risks for young children] and encircle what has been written down.

On a separate sheet, get the participants to identify some of the unpleasant effects the existence of these problems have on other people in the community and the community as a whole.

Tell the participants: *Now we're going to try to identify all the things that make these problems hard for the group to solve on their own. I'd like you to draw a ring around the group/problem identified about 3 inches out from the centre of the box at the centre of the page and, within that, put small circles around a series of obstacles to the group's problem-solving (e.g. 'No family in the community'; 'Adult children aren't willing to help, etc.).*

Go back and forth between the participant's work on the notepads and the full group flip chart summaries.

Then ask them to consider all the solutions that might be available, putting them in circles outside the inner ring. Through discussion of the group as a whole, discard those ones that are least likely to work and those that seem to make sense.

Summarize a set of solutions for each group/problem identified.

FORMING HELPING CIRCLES

In terms of planning, it is in the helping circles that the real action takes place. Try to keep them down to about four or five in size and no greater than six. If the choices are all or mostly individual and cannot be grouped to form a single project, then the group as a whole will have to be the planning group/helping circle for each participant.

If you have smaller groups than the group at large, then every 2nd or 3rd week you should

bring some of the tougher issues facing your project to the group as a whole to assist you in problem-solving.

SEQUENCE

The actual carrying out of the project should follow a sequence not dissimilar to the following:

ASSESS NEEDS → MAKE PLANS → LIST SOLUTIONS → PREPARE WORK PLAN →
FIND RESOURCES → IMPLEMENT → EVALUATE

THE STEPS IN THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

After each project group has been established, organize the process in the sequence described below. For needs assessment, planning and even ongoing implementation and evaluation, individual work should combine with small project group meetings and meetings of the entire Vision Seekers' group.

The following sequential process is recommended as a guide. In some instances, certain parts or entire stages of the sequential flow will overlap. Practical circumstances will dictate the flow.

1. ASSESS NEEDS

When we assess needs, we are usually looking for two kinds of answers (*Note*: Write these two categories on the board and teach them the difference between objective and subjective):

- i. facts, figures, statistics: in other words, *objective* information; or
- ii. opinions, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, impressions, etc, or, in other words *subjective* information.

The following series of questions should help participants (*Note*: Have them consider the two case examples above and their thoughts about them when answering these questions. Actually do a mock set of answers, using the case examples provided above as your source of information):

NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who is our target group? (Write in the following space):
- ▶ What is the unwanted situation?
- ▶ What are its main consequences?

- ▶ Who suffers from the situation?
- ▶ Who would benefit from a change in the situation?
- ▶ Who else (people or group) has tried to change the situation?
 - a. What did they do?
 - b. What were the results?
 - c. Should we join other groups/people in our efforts? How?

2. MAKING PLANS

Now that you have a grip on the actual situation, we must proceed to the planning stage. Suggest that *planning is basically deciding where you want to be within a given period of time and then creating the steps to get there.*

You should also suggest that planning is also preparation for evaluation—that is, what you plan to do should be done in such a way that when you come to evaluate you can readily measure your progress (i.e., find out if you have really done what you set out to do [in other words, to what extent you have achieved your goal(s)]).

Here are some ideas about planning:

- **Set long-term goals at first.** Make broad statements about your group's intentions. What do you hope to accomplish in the long run? Over the next two to five years, for instance, or over the duration of the project itself.

Examples of long term goals . . .

- Our group's activities will eliminate solvent abuse by 6 to 14 year olds in our community within five years.
- Within three years, second hand smoke in all public buildings on the Reserve will be eliminated through the non-smoking policies our group will lobby for during that time.

- **Set short-term objectives.** You should produce a set of more concrete, practical objectives for each broad goal. These objectives should not only relate to the goals, the should be aimed specifically at your target group.

An objective should contain an *action verb* such as "organize," "write," "stop," "decrease" or "increase", etc.

The objectives should also pass the SMART test, i.e., they should be:

- ▶ Specific

- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Time (i.e., They should have a specific period of time set for their accomplishment).

Give Examples . . .

A seniors project might include the following objectives:

- A social event for Elders will start next Friday. It will be offered every Wednesday and Friday at the Elders Drop-in Centre.
- Every Saturday, yard cleaning services will be offered free of charge to all interested seniors and chronic care patients living in their own homes.

An environmental protection project might have the following objectives:

- A fence will be constructed in late May to surround the White Buffalo Jump garbage dump site to prevent the spread of garbage by the wind from the dump site.
- Educational meetings for the Chief and Council and all interested Band members regarding pet care and stray dog management policies for the Reserve will be held three times in the upcoming year, with a speaker from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals making presentations and answering questions.

3. IDENTIFY WORKABLE SOLUTIONS

Get the participants imagination and reasoning powers going here. This is time for a brainstorm, not discussion. Have them consider a variety of solutions. For example, for a solvent abuse project, examples might be as follows:

- Don't let solvents come into the community.
- Get the RCMP to fine any druggist or other business owner who sells gas or glue to kids.
- Create a licence to buy glue or gas
- Implement a community awareness program.
- Build a detox centre for youngsters
- Have a bodyguard to look after each child suspected of sniffing glue.
- Organize games to keep kids busy after school.
- Create a local law that prohibits the use of glue or gas for sniffing purposes.

Have them list the solutions.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION LIST

CHOOSING THE MOST ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION

Once the options have been concerned, it is time to focus on the single or few most appropriate solutions. You might suggest that, in choosing a solution, they might consider the following questions:

1. Is the solution acceptable to the people directly affected (target group and family, caregivers, etc.)?
2. Is the solution acceptable in terms of community norms and values?
3. Is the solution acceptable to the community leadership (Chief and Council and relevant committees)?
4. Is it realistic, given the financial resources available? human resources? energies of project group or individual?
5. Does it respect our values?

4. PREPARE A WORK PLAN

Instruct the participants:

It is now time to figure how you will proceed to achieve your goals. You have something of a snapshot of the situation at hand: You have set long-term goals and concrete objectives and you have chosen solutions. It's time to answer the following questions:

- What is to be done?
- Who will do it?

- How will it be done?
- When will it be done?
- How will results be measured?
- When will they be measured?

NOTE: It should be recognized that these are troubled children and that, in general, the security of those benefitting from these services must be very carefully considered—especially the physically and mentally vulnerable. For example, there should be adult supervision of any home maintenance or home visiting services.

You might want to use the work plan matrix on the following page to get group summaries shown and discussed by the group as a whole.

Work Plan . . .

What's to be done?	Who will do it?	How?	When?	How/when will results be measured?

5. FINDING RESOURCES

Instruct the participants at the beginning of this stage: *Now you have a concrete plan about how to proceed. It's time to find the resources, both human and material. Don't try to do the entire project by yourself. Try to get others involved. Maybe the Band staff. Maybe other Vision Seekers. Maybe get some advice from an Elder or a Band administration worker. You might follow these steps:*

1. *Identify the things you will need to make your project work.*
2. *Talk to the Band Administrator and Health Director to see if there are any funds, equipment, transportation or meeting/activity space arrangements that might be made available—and establish an agreement as to their use.*
3. *Identify the people that might help you in your efforts.*
4. *Secure the agreement of those who will help.*

6. IMPLEMENTING YOUR PLAN

It is time to get on with the implementation of the plan. Remind participants that the following things will have to be carried out:

- They should get their project group together and, if necessary identify a coordinator.
- Make sure everyone knows what they are to do and when they are to do it.
- Contact those in the target group and arrange for meeting/task times.
- Publicize the activity. Make sure community leaders and those directly affected are fully aware of what you are doing and your schedule.
- Meet regularly to review work (probably during Vision Seeker sessions)

7. EVALUATION

Ask participants *why* they think evaluation is important. Make sure that they get the link between determining *if* a goal was achieved and why it was achieved or was not achieved. Also indicate to them that evaluation is something that is empowering: It tells people how to change the ways they are doing things in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in realizing their own ends.

Indicate that evaluation should take place in an ongoing way and at the conclusion of certain intervals (e.g. the midpoint and the end of the project).

The following questions should be asked:

- ☐ Did the project accomplish what it set out to do?
- ☐ Were the target groups involved in running the project? How?
- ☐ Who was reached by the project?
- ☐ How many were reached?
- ☐ What were the positive effects on the group?
- ☐ Did the project have any effect on the problems or needs identified? What?

Show the participants various ways to measure the effects, such as

- a. forms to fill out indicating activities carried out/not carried out at particular, scheduled times.
- b. feedback comments from target group
- c. evaluation questionnaires.

Suggest to them that, as they proceed, the group should discuss the feedback on the project and make any necessary changes.



EXERCISE 10.2

CELEBRATING GRADUATION

OVERVIEW

It is strongly recommended that each community Vision Seekers program should prepare its own specific graduation ceremonies for those children completing the second year of the program. It is also important that the graduation coincide with the completion of the community service project (or a significant element of it) and that the recipients of the services provided (whether an elderly person getting services, a "little brother" in a helping relationship with a Vision Seeker who is acting as his/her mentor, or the Chief and Council who have had benefitted from a general infrastructure project assisted by the efforts of the Vision Seeker).

SOME HINTS

1. In preparation for the ceremony, the Counsellor and the Coordinator should assist the youth revisit his personal and program goals and assess the progress made.
2. Various people should be involved in the ceremony, including parents, siblings, *all* of the Vision Seekers group (and former participants), the Chief, program staff, Mentors, Elders, etc.
3. The youth's accomplishments should be stated before the gathering—as should some of the areas that the youth is committed to continue working on.
4. The youth might be asked to provide a testimonial about the strengths of the program and what s/he got out of it.
5. A trophy or diploma should be provided.
6. A durable gift should be provided, perhaps a trophy, watch, or Vision Seekers jacket or a highly personalized gift related to the participant's hobby or skill.
7. Participants should be asked to return to visit the program to assist in some way, including sharing their experiences of the program.
8. If there is sufficient interest, a formal cadre of *Vision Seekers' Volunteers* might be formed.